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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

ELITE AND IDEOLOGY IN AFRICAN LITERATURE IN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

by

© GEORGE MACLAINE LANG

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Elite and Ideology in African Literature" submitted by George Maclaine Lang in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature.

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Without the perceptive criticism of Prof. Juan Ferraté at all major stages of its development, this thesis would not have taken the shape it has, nor perhaps have even taken shape. I am deeply indebted to him for both his insight and his discretion.

ABSTRACT

Critics have hitherto responded to the emergence of "post-colonial" literature by applying the criteria they also use to describe Western literatures. A new national literature, almost always tied to a nation-state, but sometimes to geographical (sub-Saharan Africa), political, or linguistic and cultural (the Commonwealth, la francophonie, o luso-tropicalismo) groupings, is said to exist when there is a substantial body of work in accepted genres which expresses a cultural "specificity". Very little theoretical or analytical study has been made of the premises of these critical categories, those underlying "Third World Literature".

The aim of this thesis is to make a contribution to the debate over Third World Literature by detecting contradictions inherent within modern African Literature in European languages and discussing their theoretical implications.

Robert Escarpit asked in 1964 whether the building block of literary history ought to be a people, a nation, a state, or a class. He concluded that the latter would be the most fruitful in the long run. Seen from a "class standpoint", however, the current state of African Literature appears radically different from what it is often described to be.

The marketplace of African Literature is both economically and sociologically centered on the West, and African writers, whatever good intentions they may have, are members of a mandarinat in possession of a literate and powerful culture inaccessible to the masses. The results of this fundamental contraction are manifold.

Both semiotic analysis of the ideological content of one exemplary work of paraliterature, Elizabeth, My Love, and a sociological study of its background show that the Onitsha pamphlets are unlikely to spawn a mass literature.

At the other end of the scale of literary quality, the highly refined, hermetic and self-conscious poetry of Tchicaya U Tam'si speaks of the confusion of the elite increasingly aware not so much of its alienation from African tradition as of its ambiguous relationship with the forces of neo-colonialism.

African ideologues of the négritude school and others who in spite of opposition to négritude base their theories upon cultural identity and difference or upon tradition and modernity (Senghor, Ch. Anta Diop, Jahn, etc.), exemplify the binary nature of ideological strife all the while their essentially elitist discourse passes by the material and political problems of the African masses. A similar process can be seen among New World proponents of Africanist doctrines (Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, U.S.).

Materialist or revolutionary discourse (e.g. Fanon) is by no means exempt from binary rhetorical patterns or even from the accusation of elitism. Vanguards all too often confuse party history with mass history, and both nationalist and revolutionary ideologies are predicated upon implicit assumptions, analogies and metaphors which are out of place in "objective" discourse.

These examples lead to disturbing conclusions for the Western or Westernized critic and to a dilemma which is germane to further critical deliberations over the nature of Third World Literature: either there is a developing literary tradition which is radically disparate from that purveyed in the West; or the work labelled non-Western are mere exotica which are then integrated into the international literary system and classified according to its essentially Western criteria. For reasons made clear throughout the course of the thesis, an original literary tradition can come forth only through the political reorganization of the developing countries outside of the neo-colonial economic and cultural system which presently determines their development.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic conventions have it that a thesis is something to defend. It is a proposition, particular to its holder, of which the validity must be proven by argument and extended treatment, by dissertation. That sense of the word is germane to this present thesis, more an exploration in theory than in history or textual analysis. Our aim has been to apply a single critical motif to a wide array of aspects of contemporary African literary practice, and to draw theoretical conclusions from the critical junctures that result. We would apply to the Humanities the principle of scientific research that the most daring hypotheses have the widest implications, are the most promising of scientific progress, but are also the most risky.

Critical judgements upon African Literature (and of what is often called "Third World Literature") must be based, we shall argue, upon a grasp of their sociological context, of their demography. Many aspects of literary theory follow directly from a preliminary assessment of any given set of *faits littéraires*-- "literary date". Who has access to literature? The question was of course that of the Chinese poet-politician Mao Tse-tung in 1938, but one is not obliged at all to be of his school to come to the same conclusion about the proper bases of literary theory. Robert Escarpit, for one, approached the problem in his own way during the IVth Congress of the ICLA:

> De nos jours ce sont les groupes sociaux supranationaux et inter-linguistiques, mais clairement définis par un certain statut social, un certain mode de vie, qui fournissent les structures les plus propres à ordonner les faits littéraires. Alors que s'estompent les contours des littératures nationales, une littérature féminine, une littérature universelle, dont les traits sont particulièrement marqués. Si l'on a plus de mal à distinguer une littérature populaire, c'est que le mot "peuple" est un fourre-tout sémantique dont on a usé et abusé. Il vaut mieux parler de littérature de classe.... Si nous ne percevons pas toujours le phénomène, c'est que nous sommes en train de le vivre. Ce que nous appelons la littérature, nous lettrés, intellectuels universitaires, ce que nous étudions est le produit d'une civilisation où une classe seulement participe au dialogue littéraire.[1]

This sharp criticism of university narcissism does not confine analysis of literature to the topics of class origin and allegiance, but then neither did Marx and those who followed him[2] (it does however appear to confuse "universal" with "masculine"--or at least mark off "feminine" from universal in a dubious way). Writing from within the innermost sanctum of the university elite, Escarpit does not dismiss out of hand the possibility of bridging "class" or "cultural" gaps, if we can extend the definition of the latter, overworked adjective from its ethnic (or horizontal) sense to one which is vertical, one which takes into account the cultures of different class strata, stacked one upon the other.

But Escarpit does make it clear that our traditional notion of literature, what Mouralis calls the *champ littéraire*,[3] is often not only ethnocentric (a traditional bugaboo for comparatists), but class-oriented, relative, partial. The difference which separates an elite from those without it has fundamental repercussions on our understanding of both literary and non-literary culture.

We intend herewith to investigate some of those barriers, the lines of cleavage, the tensions brought on by contact of cultures which are not in "horizontal" contact--or more accurately, which are not in contact at all. The now famous Negro-African *retour aux sources* of this century supplemented knowledge of the elite alone, for it has relatively easy access to the culture of the masses. The masses have no reciprocal access to the culture of the elite. The barrier between them is selectively osmotic, so to speak.

The subject of this thesis is the literary and intellectual ramifications of the gap between a refined elite and a generally illiterate and impoverished mass. These are many, take many forms, and each chapter deals in turn with a side of this dichotomy--in logic, a "division of a class into two opposed subclasses". They run from the main traits of the literary marketplace of contemporary African writers, to the definition of what is literary and paraliterary within Africa, oral or written, to the themes and poetics of one brilliant contemporary stylist, Tchicaya U Tam'si. In later chapters other problems are treated, the outlines and rhetorical combinations and permutations of African literary perspectives, New World varieties, nationalist and revolutionary approaches. The topic is a complex one which requires keeping one eye on the Western doctrines which justified colonialism and which colonialism disseminated; another eye on both indigenous and a spreading "popular" African culture; and a third, intuitive eye on the not-so-easily classifiable concrete experience of the men who make ideology.

This last proviso is a wise and necessary one when expatiating upon the interaction of rhetoric, ideology and creative human experience. For if, on the one hand, both our prescriptions for and descriptions of reality are moulded by predispositions acquired at one moment of the learning and learned process which is culture, on the other, within the vast and complex realm of meaning and self-expression which language opens to us, there is provision for literally an infinite sum of deviations and departures. The ideological "patterns" of which we speak are to be sure scholarly projections: any academic discourse smooths over the rough edges and darns the loose ends of what, in any event, very very few will ever read. Scholarship is a world unto its own.

Yet those patterns do exist--if neither in some nebulous semiotic realm (de Saussure's *grande nébuleuse*), nor in *der Geist* which *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (one of, along with Lenin's *"Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, the great polemics in World Literature) so thoroughly took the straw out of, then surely at some intermediate level. Each culture develops heuristics, its pedagogy for organizing sundry sensory impressions and mental perceptions in its own way, and each can be recognized for itself. One theoretical problem posed by contemporary African Literature is knowing whether or not the binary patterns within it result from thorough assimilation of our own European and typically binary ones--perhaps to be suspected since English, French and Portuguese are the vehicular languages of that elite. If so, then the influence of the West has indeed been profound; if not, the African case is yet another demonstration of the commonality of all human experience, for binary patterns are one of the most familiar features of world culture.

Under the increasing influence of university Marxism, ideology has become a central concern of criticism and semiotics, particularly in the French-speaking world where Marxism, as a creed, as a rhetorical tradition and as a political practice has penetrated much farther than in English-speaking milieu.[4] This is in part due to the not-surprisingly large German influence upon French culture in the twentieth century. Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, each in his own way, raise the issue of the relativity of conscious thought. But it is also because English is the major language of capitalist liberalism, as it is of advanced technology--the two if only for those purely practical reasons would go hand in hand--and the notion of ideology and all that it implies about the relativity of that culture has never taken hold, in spite of early translations of Mannheim.

The concept of ideology is also related to that of cultural relativism which has inspired Comparative Literature from its beginnings. The rhythm of research is the same in both cases: as a first step, multifold examples of heterogenous material are brought to the fore, sufficient evidence, the scholar hopes, to shake the commonplace faith of his culture in its own singularity. Then, in a second stage, the scholar seeks out an underlying principle to explain the multiplicity of human phenomena, thus setting a common denominator and a basis of unity for the profusion of human culture.

Sociological approaches and in particular Marxism define ideology by measuring a segment of the given code against a "deeper" reality, by comparing superstructural features against infrastructural ones. Others, although never slipping very far from this cross-comparison of two "levels" of reality, define ideology as internal crystallizations of the language system or cultural code. According to Umberto Eco, this is one of the ways semiotics could assume an active, extra-scholarly role, perhaps even outside the university compound.

> A questo livello però l'impresa semiotica può assumere il suo vero ruolo demistificante: un giudizio metasemiotico dovrebbe mostrare come il rapporto tra un determinato uso della lingua e un sistema semantico particolare si sia storicamente cristallizzato, bloccando ogni possibilità di un discorso metasemantico.

Ideology can be analyzed formally as a certain configuration within language. Ideology and rhetoric are fundamentally identical. What distinguishes them is the approach, metaphysical or formal.

This is therefore an eclectic thesis, and justifiably so. We have at once related the ideological patterns of African literary culture to their background, to their social context, to a precise structural feature of contemporary African society (the disparity between the African elite and masses), and have sought out formal indications--e.g. binary and triadic rhetorical structures--as evidence of internal crystallizations in Eco's sense. Yet both abstract terms in our title deserve more elaboration. They are the lynchpins of the reasoning we apply to the critical raw material of African literary culture.

Although the concept of social classes has many non-Marxist precedents and coevals,[6] we cannot discuss the idea of an elite and hence of class conflict, especially in a thesis upon the Third World, without situating ourselves in terms of Marxism. Nor would we want to: there is a good case to be made, though perhaps not in the way Sartre does in Critique de la raison dialectique,[7] that Marxism is the emerging and actually already quite dominant philosophy of our time in the way Christianity was in the late Roman Empire: the immediate constituent of "world culture"for perhaps a millenium. That kind of statement cannot be proven, but maybe what a Roman of that time and a contemporary intellectual have in common is writing at the onset of a rhetorical tradition whose authority is such that all previous knowledge and culture must be reshaped--as in both the U.S.S.R. and in China. Well over three-fourths of the total world population (the proper frame of reference for a comparatist) now have Marxism, in particular Marxist-Leninism, as official, governmental ideology. Intellectuals in the West, and in some places the working class organized in one socialist party or another, have been heavily influenced by it (such that a topic like "The Influence of Marxism upon Contemporary Thought" would be too broad for even a comparatist). And even those recalcitrant to it have had to adopt its arguments--certainly one way to look upon the social democratic reform movements which have been as much a product of Marxism as Stalinism. Indeed, the spread of Marxism in the past century makes the rise of Christianity, the diffusion of Buddhism or even the victory of Islam appear child's play. And, whereas those major world religions were essentially ethnic or moral in precept, Marxism makes a more thorough-going claim: it sets as its basic aim the conquest of political and economic power, goals rapidly adopted by the secular and spiritual leaders of the past major religious movements, but which were not explicit in them.

In other words, much of the Marxist canon is, in terms of the criteria--wide readership, impact upon language, ideological weight and importance as a frame of reference--comparatists themselves apply to the Bible and Shakespeare, henceforth part and parcel of World Literature. Apart from the works of Marx himself, Mao, and Lenin (whose bent for topical polemicizing produced some fine anthology pieces of the polemic genre), there are numerous contenders in the past and present for the role of disciples or exegete to the Masters. Although the Maoist conflation of Confucius and Lin-Piao has direct political repercussions and targets, it is undoubtedly inspired by the still strong Chinese tradition. Indeed, it does not take much imagination to speak of Lao-Tze and Mao in the same breath, and "On Contradiction" is more than vaguely reminiscent of the doctrine of Yin and Yang.

The fascination of Marxism is its rationality. In spite of its welter of sects and sometimes contradictory logic (but surely no more or less than any other philosophy which has become, in the word encyclopedias usually reserve for the world's religions, living), it occupies a firm place within continental European philosophy as one of two major purported "post-metaphysical" schools, the other being the phenomenological tradition developed out of Husserl by Sartre and Heidegger. It sometimes even seems that the wily politicians which were Marx, Engels, Lenin, Rosa Luxembourg, Gramsci, Mao and innumerable other figures of Marxism, strategically occupied a key position within

Western thought. They insist that history has a sense and that one can know it through the dialectic. That is the precise "get-up-and-go" attitude which would attract the men of action who "make" revolutions (and much else--Malraux's association with de Gaulle is a logical deduction from La Voie royale or Les Conquérants): philosophically, storming and seizing that position is tantamount to laying claim to the lion's share of the Western heritage, however crude some may consider Lenin's remarks on empiri -materialism or Lukacs' on Klassenbewusstsein. Those who would still attribute meaning to history are left with pragmatism, religion or humanism. Even those other inheritors of Hegelian tradition who find meaning in history and who also have designs upon the State, the Fascists, were displaced and now justify their actions with irrational appeals to emotion and faith. The inner coherence of Marxism has been forged throughout the past century by polemicists and political in-fighters who knew how to turn to their own ends the power the text has to promote hierarchical power within the pyramidal organizations which Marx claimed were the only instruments of political change. He would of course find agreement to this last remark among those who control one faction or another of capitalist society.

Even a non-conformist like Sartre can argue that Marxism, because of its privileged role as practice and philosophy of the proletariat whose historically inevitable hegemony is one of its (Marxism's) main tenets, is now part of the inner structure of history, and this in a very Hegelian sense. Lukacs' definition of class conscience as the coincidence of an ideology and a moment of history--"the sense, become conscious, of the historical role of the class"[8]--is close to Sartre's:

> Je le répète: ce n'était pas l'idée qui nous bouleversait; ce n'était pas non plus la condition ouvrière, dont nous avions une connaissance abstraite mais non l'expérience. Non: c'était l'une liée à l'autre, c'était, aurions-nous dit alors dans notre jargon d'idéalistes en rupture d'idéalisme, le prolétariat comme incarnation et véhicule d'une idée.[9]

And both Lukacs' and Sartre's propositions are replica of the Hegelian convergence of Idea and History. To those who believe that history can embody ideas, the only remaining question is if in fact the proletariat is the embodiment of an idea, since so few ideas other than that of the proletariat have been proposed for over a century.

Merleau-Ponty put the dilemma in Cartesian (and Stalinist) terms:

> Y a-t-il une mission historique du prolétariat, à la fois force motrice de la société nouvelle et porteur des valeurs d'humanité? Ou au contraire, la révolution est-elle inévitablement une entreprise toute volontaire conduite par des chefs et par une catégorie dirigeante subie par les autres?[10]

Though possibly deeply influenced by Marxism, anyone who holds the latter to be the case cannot be a Marxist in any doctrinal sense. He faces, however, philosophical problems of his own.

On the other hand, he who accepts the first assertion is often "locked into" a lengthy series of ensuing, syllogistic deductions, not the least demanding of which is the remoulding of all past knowledge of which we spoke above. Everything becomes or must be transposed into class terms. The party becomes the arbiter of value judgements, for it is the most organized sector of the proletariat, the incarnation of that incarnation of historical ideas which is the proletariat. And those who reject this logic are at a loss for a Logic of their own, as Merleau-Ponty himself indicates several pages later.

> Considéré de près, le marxisme n'est pas une hypothèse quelconque, remplaçable demain par une autre, c'est le simple énoncé des conditions sans lesquelles il n'y aura pas d'humanité au sens d'une rélation réciproque entre les hommes, ni de rationnalité dans l'histoire. En ce sens, ce n'est pas une philosophie de l'histoire, c'est la philosophie de l'histoire et y renoncer, c'est faire une croix sur la Raison historique. Après quoi, il n'y a plus que rêveries ou aventures.[11]

The exclusivity of this binary opposition is not only rhetorical. It follows as well from the need to ascribe a logic to history in the Hegelian terms which were Marx's deepest inheritance, the heuristic he acquired from Hegel. And those who have rejected Hegelian logic offer in exchange only transitory and illusory "Logics" to history. The history of twentieth century literature, such movements as surrealism, expressionism, futurism, existentialism and even the great artistic masterpieces of our time which rise above schools and manifestoes and found their pessimism and despair upon aesthetic grounds, is one brilliant, if partial, illustration. Marxism is the major "alternative" form which the rage for Reason has taken in our times, the primary one being the capitalist mode of production. (However wasteful, destructive or unjust, capitalist society is firmly based upon a rationale, on accountability and system.) Marxist class reasoning hence shares some very striking traits with the capitalist rationale, as Marx himself implied in relating socialism to capitalism in many if not all of the same ways he related capitalism to feudalism. Jean Baudrillard pushes this logic even further:

> Le concept de classe est un concept rationaliste, universaliste, né d'une société de production rationnelle et du calcul des forces productives: en ce sens, il n'y a jamais eu et il n'y aura qu'une seule classe: la bourgeoisie, la classe bourgeoise--définie non seulement par la propriété des moyens de production, mais par la finalité rationnelle de la production.[12]

This particular attack upon Leninism is not quite clearly that which would accuse the Soviet and Chinese elite within their respective Leninist parties of being merely the most efficient wing of the world bourgeoisie which is turning all human life to the ends of production. But it sets the grounds for such an argument.

The economic exploitation to which Africa is subject[13] makes this last line of thought moot, for, like it or not, production and its forms are the name of the game being played by the three superpowers as they struggle for Africa. And confronted with a system of exploitation which is for the moment an instrument of Western wealth, Africa has no room to philosophize about how all three superpowers share a single times, the primary one being the capitalist mode of production. (However wasteful, destructive or unjust, capitalist society is firmly based upon a *rationale*, on accountability and system.) Marxist class reasoning hence shares some very striking traits with the capitalist rationale, as Marx himself implied in relating socialism to capitalism in many if not all of the same ways he related capitalism to feudalism. Jean Baudrillard pushes this logic even further:

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Measured against this thumbnail sketch of the main lines of Marxist argumentation (so far from complete that one ought not even be obliged to say that it is only a sketch), our own use of the concept of class is far from orthodox, perhaps even heretical.

In the first place, we use the concept of class in a purely analytical way. The difference and conflict between the African elite and masses serves, critically, to situate the problems of African society and culture, and at a level which must remain secondary in an academic thesis, to establish priorities and principles regarding the Third World and the West's relationship to it. Our use of the concept is not synthetic: its two terms are never portrayed as the "motor of history", force motrice, in the way that within orthodox Marxist thought the industrial proletariat is the single class which can transform history. We have not enumerated the dialectical links between the elite and the masses, for that complex operation would be another thesis in itself. Far better, in our opinion, to complete a more preliminary analysis, understanding of which precedes any dialectical study.

In the second place, the industrial proletariat which is at the centre stage of orthodox Marxist thought is still largely unformed in Africa. Indeed, at one point (Chapter Eight) we argue along with Fanon that many in this class are more properly thought of as members of an elite.[14] To be sure, the Chinese revolution was to a large extent based upon the peasantry and in this sense "Maoism", all the while it has become a new orthodoxy of its own, deviates from the core of Marxist thought (though quite successfully). In fact much of contemporary Marxism is now devoted to adapting perceptions of Das Kapital and the early works to the peripheral, i.e. Third World areas outside of the burgeonning centres of capitalism where, with the exception of Southern Europe (and even that remains speculation), Marxists must expect their forthcoming successes (e.g. Cabral, Fanon, Guevara, etc.) But neither of these factors obviates the fact that our use of class does not accurately fit into a Marxist framework, however much it may be influenced by Marxism.

In Chapter Eight, "Rhetoric and Revolution", this becomes obvious when we posit a critique of many revolutionary spokesmen in terms of the elite/masses dichotomy itself. And here again we deviate from orthodoxy in a crucial and telling way.

To return to Merleau-Ponty's aforementioned dilemma, it is undoubtedly true that revolutionary leaders, parties, movements and politics are in fact volontaires, self-willed. Given Merleau-Ponty's logic, the predicament which he offered up to his readers, it would therefore follow that the proletariat has no historical mission, a statement which is perilously close to declaring that history has no meaning. Our view, our thesis, is that there is no logical barrier between those alternatives, which are rather a product of Merleau-Ponty's, to take that one example, rhetoric. Rhetoric is the basis of confrontation, and the converse, something which every good polemicist knows. One of the instruments available to those struggling against elite domination is the concept of the elite, and that concept is not only necessarily dichotomous and conflictual, but, at the present moment of history, tied to the Marxist concept of the proletariat, only one of its forms. But the exclusivity, the either-or choice Merleau-Ponty and many others impose is an effect of rhetoric and of confrontation. Ideology "permeates" everywhere, to the pamphlets and doctrines of "self-willed" political leaders, to the very binary formulation of the irreconciliability of any two positions. (Later, in Chapter Eight, we explain why our own use of a binary opposition, the elite/masses dichotomy, is justifiable and not self-contradictory in a thesis where we argue against binary thought.)

Within the African revolutionary tradition there is much that potentially bears"the values of all humanity". And the argument can be made that the Third World holds the key to the future of mankind, not only because it represents the great mass of mankind, but because its resources are vital to the development of the rest of the world in the way it is currently developing--or not. But at no point in time or history, and at none in the Third World either, is there an identity of doctrine and truth, of program and practice, of Idea and History. Ideology, defined either as false consciousness or as in the words of Baudrillard, as "dédoublement structural binaire" and "autonomisation d'un ensemble partiel", is a fancy way of saying "thought".[15]

At times this goal will take us far afield, for if our central subject matter and material is African and Afro-American literary culture--the culture of the literate--the intellectual background, methodology and general implications of this study are not circumscribed to that sphere.

Our intellectual foundations are eclectic, heteroclite, not only because of our starting point, the Western comparative literary tradition, but also because contemporary African writers are at once the masters of their own increasingly voluminous scholarly tradition, and conversant with sometimes the most remote recesses of World Literature (Okigbo is the best example, his imitations of Virgil, allusions to Eliot, Pound and Yeats, and self-conscious recovery of his Ibo heritage). They are especially conversant with the English and French traditions of their former colonial masters, and can only at the risk of the critic be approached from one dimension.

Methodologically, therefore, we have selected no single instrument of truth. Semiotics, the sociology of literature, history, economics, formal and thematic literary analysis--all of these have contributions to make.

The conclusion of this thesis is more than a summary of conclusions already arrived at and digested. The bearing of the bulk of a thesis upon general principles is the only justification for amassing footnote and evidence and argument at all. The underlying raison d'être of this thesis, the reason it is worth defending, is that the still nascent theory of Third World--necessarily dependent upon the larger definition of what the Third World itself is--must be able to account for what occurs in Africa, and for the multifold problems following from the gap between an elite and the masses. Our argument is that the Third World is not a geographical or racial or ultimately even economic category, although all those levels of reality are involved; the Third World exists as a "moment" of conflict and contradiction. The theoretical space of the Third World is that realm of contradiction wherein we seek a dialectical resolution of domination, hierarchy and the separation of Man from Man.

FOOTNOTES: INTRODUCTION

[1] Robert Escarpit, "Les Cadres de l'histoire littéraire", *Actes*, IVe Congrès de l'AILC, Fribourg, 1964, p. 200.

[2] Lee Baxendall and Stefan Morawski, *Marx and Engels on Literature and Art, A Selection*, St. Louis, 1973.

[3] Bernard Mouralis, *Les Contre-littératures*, Paris 1975, pp. 37-64.

[4] Michel Vadée's bibliographie in *L'Idéologie*, Paris, is to be recommended.

[5] Umberto Eco, *Le forme del contenuto*, Milano, 1971, p. 152.

[6] Georges Gurvitch, *Les Classes sociales*, Paris, 1970.

[7] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique*, Paris, 1960, pp. 15-32, esp. pp. 22-23.

[8] Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness* (*Die Geschichte und das Klassenbewusstsein*), Cambridge, 1971, p. 73.

[9] Sartre, *Critique*, p. 23.

[10] Merleau-Ponty, Humanisme et terreur, Paris, 1947, p. 161.

[11] Merleau-Ponty, ibid., p. 165.

[12] Jean Baudrillard, Le Miroir de la production, Paris, 1973, p. 135.

[13] Pierre Jalée, Le Pillage du tiers monde, Paris: Maspéro, 1973.

[14] Frantz Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre, Paris: Maspéro, 1970, p. 143. See the end of our Chapter Two.

[15] Jean Baudrillard, Le Miroir de la production, pp. 16, 127.

CHAPTER ONE: THE MARKETPLACE OF THE MANDARINAT

A mandarin is a member of a literate elite in possession of his society's most powerful linguistic and taxonomic tools. The *mandarinat* is lettered, but this is not its essential quality. Mandarins are rather the *comessi*, the bureaucrats of a political order. They handle not just its red tape and policy planning, but also its cultural superstructure, its educational system, its official culture. They confirm Gramsci's refusal to define intellectuals by something intrinsic in mental activity, "e non invece nell'insieme del sistema di rapporti in cui esse (e quindi i gruppi che le impersonano) vengono a trovarsi nel complesso generale dei rapporti sociali".[1]

According to *Webster's*, the very word "mandarin" is related by way of Sanskrit *mantrin*, counselor, to the Indo-European root "*men*-", which does mean "to think". The literate culture of a mandarin caste is moreover congruent with the practice of governmental power, and it is tempting to those who are themselves intellectuals to take the status of thinker as a condition for, rather than concomitant of, the practice of power. Gramsci refers to the *preconcetti di casta* at the base of that confusion.[2]

The literary elite of the literate elite creates an elegant subculture. Literature, rather than red tape, is its entreprise. Frequent appeals to tradition and its presumably imperishable values mystify its material circumstances, and feed the illusion that the mandarin class is above history:

> Une delle caratteristiche degli intellettuali come categoria sociale cristallizzata (che cioè concepisce se stessa come continuazione ininterrotta nella storia, quindi indipendente dalla lotta dei gruppi e non come espressione di un processo dialettico, per cui ogni gruppo sociale dominante elabora una propria categoria di intellettuali) è appunto di recongiungersi, nella sfera ideologica, a una precedente categoria intellettuale attraverso una stessa nomenclatura di concetti.[3]

Until a literary elite asks *for whom* its literacy is at work, it reflects and furthers the values of the *gruppo* which supports it, all the while refusing its own social function.[4]

In spite of the numerous differences between contemporary Africa and feudal China, the notion of a mandarin caste applies well to African literary culture, among others. There is a wide gap between the elite and a large mass of peasants, an equally lop-sided distribution of literacy and other techniques of mass social organization, and, finally, a literary culture completely impermeable to those outside the elite. Although we agree with his words, we do not therefore mean the same thing as the Nigerian critic John Pepper Clark when he wrote: "In the new literature of Africa written in a number of European languages, the issue of literacy lies at the bottom of much of its criticism".[5] He was referring to conversance with the linguistic and literary norms of the West: polished English or French, a knowledge and respect for Western literary models, and the successful integration of some traits of indigenous African culture into those models. This notion of literacy is, if accepted, a secondary one on a continent which is still largely analphabetic. Literacy in Africa primarily means learning to read and write.

In this light the African literati are twice over an elite, once as members of the limited gruppo who can read and write, and have access not only to the wider international but the wider African world, and once again as an even narrower collection of individuals interested in literature. This second qualification does not in the least alter the first, although conflict may well occur between those who practise power and those who, practising literature, consider themselves guardians of spiritual values. The novels of "disillusion" in anglophone Africa and the increasingly virulent tone of frustration in francophone writings, best exemplified by Ouologuem perhaps, but foreshadowed as long ago as the early sixties in the poems of Tchicaya, express this contradiction.

We agree with Gramsci's view of intellectuals: "Tutti gli uomini sono intellettuali; ma non tutti gli uomini hanno nella società la funzione di intellettuali".[6] All men are creative; all use creative imagination; all have a moral vision. But the role of intellectual, the power to wield one's imagination on a social scale, to do "social work", is the privilege of a select few. Literary artists are a sub-species of that select few. Even those critical of the elite and existing power structures are part of this happy few who are also quite adept at defending their privileges. Although their works have an apparently restricted audience in bourgeois and neo-colonial societies (or, if disseminated through the mass media, belong more properly to the category of paraliterature, of an inauthentic sub-literature),[7] they are nonetheless of "value" and use to the class they serve. All men are intellectuals, but only those who organize society and its values function as such. The image of the modernist littéraire as a hypersensitive, hypochondriac dreamer is, no doubt, partially accurate, and is a logical consequence of the nineteenth century schism between the writer and the bourgeois public which Auerbach, among others, has patiently described.[8] On the other hand, insofar as this image applies to intellectuals at large, it is a mask, a smokescreen. Intellectuals are precisely those who exercise power. The collusion between large sectors of university and governing centers in both Africa and the West contradicts the self-pitying and morose self-image of the Western intellectual as a sort of over-specialized, scatter-brained or culturally-fragmented individual.

The African literati are still working such a self-image. They until recently have been engaged in a struggle against a common outside enemy, European colonialism, and the growth of a public, of a mass audience "idéologiquement petit-embourgeoisée", has just begun.[9] Whether through best-sellers or the mass media, the indoctrination of the latter and the cultural arms and tools it requires spurs movement towards disillusionment and the schism and isolation of a full-fledged "modernist" culture. The African writer, but only in fits and starts, is just on the point of seeing himself as enemy, of becoming a modernist.

This is not the place to discuss in detail the most elementary facts of the economic and political exploitation to which the African continent is subject.[10] But one cannot intelligently discuss African literature without first establishing certain facts about its production, distribution, and public. Critical discourse usually leaves aside the material support of literature.[11] We cannot afford to do so.

Emphasis upon the book and its material existence ought not preclude, nonetheless, an even more prerequisite level of analysis: whatever is present "in" the book is not as significant as the very act of reading. The one precedes the other in not only a chronological, but an essential sense. We need not embrace the speculations of McLuhan in order to contrast literate and oral societies. The permanence of writing does enable literate societies to accumulate information more efficiently, but what is "in" the book follows from a learned response to certain codes, and beyond that to the neuro-motor mechanisms which enable us to read. Rich in implications for future literary practice, this "sociological" attitude to literature, subjugates the habitually venerated content of literature to its context.

In Africa, to realize the implications of this is to take into account the fact that approximately 80% of the population is illiterate, that a tiny percentage of those who read read Literature, and that those who do, not only, like all readers, bear preconceptions, but also do not necessarily share them with the official arbiters of literary taste. The usual, elitist definition of the literary depends on a *consensus des lettrés*, and upon the literary use made of given texts.[12] Such literary use of a text is possible only when the reader has been trained in literate literary appreciation, when he has certain literary preconceptions. The poems of Christopher Okigbo, the "Ezra Pound of Africa", are unintelligible to anyone unfamiliar with modernist culture and techniques.

Escarpit's formulation of the prerequisites for national literature is incomplete on, though certainly correct about the following points:

> ...il ne peut y avoir de production littéraire originale dans un pays s'il n'existe pas une population d'écrivains

> suffisante pour alimenter cette production et s'il n'existe pas une population de lecteurs suffisante pour permettre la consommation qui la justifie soit doctrinalement, soit économiquement.[13]

There can also be no original literary production if there is no book industry; if that industry is foreign there is even less chance of one. This is all the more true of "literary" production, which, best-sellers apart, is a marginal operation. With the exception of some scholarly publishing by the University Presses (Dakar, Abidjan, Ibadan, Lagos), a few anthologies and studies published by Clé, the efforts of various literature bureaux, and a smattering of limited circulation presses, virtually all the literary production of Africa is centered on Paris and London, much of it for sale to the U.S., where internal circumstances have created a market for Africana over the past decade. Présence Africaine and Heinemann Educational Books are the two major literary publishers, and we should not believe, because both specialize in African literature and encourage its publication, that they represent any more than a preliminary step in African publishing. Heinemann's African Writers Series may be used in universities throughout Africa, and may have offices in Nigeria and Kenya, but the profits return to London; and there is little evidence that this state of affairs will change.

This is not to say that there is no African literature. In fact there has been a veritable explosion of poetry, plays and novels within the past fifteen years. But what kind of literature is created in the above circumstances, who are its readers? The main body of our study is devoted to the first question. But the phenomenon of literature, like that of reading itself, is more than textual, more than exploitation of textual patterns and structures. The set or cadre of a given act of reading preconditions the perception of that literature. Economics rules the physical production and distribution of the books themselves. But literature also has sociological and demographic coordinates. Who "consumes" African literature; who participates in the event of its reading?

The development of African literature depends upon developing its audience. Literature is more than a collection of books, more than texts: a literature exists within a network of persons who read or pretend to read its works, and who perceive them as a unity. A national literature is as much a product of "psychological and social particularities, the economic and political situation of the reader" as is the text itself. And the concept of a national literature is as much that of a "psychological apparatus or device" as Roubakine alleged the work itself to be. Wellek claims that criticism has its own internal history, which is related only "to a minor degree" to the actual practice of literature.[14] Escarpit reduces criticism to a collection of mere opinion on reading experiences, un discours sur un discours. The public and its prejudices plays an important role in the perception and therefore ultimately the make-up of literature.

The potential African public is divided into a European and an

African audience, and, within Africa itself, the literate elite and the illiterate masses who are becoming literate. Most African critics assume that these latter, as they become literate over the next generation or two, will become the mass audience which everyone agrees African writers need. Mohamadou Kane speaks of a quintupling of literacy rates over the next twenty years which, in conjunction with the existing literary activity in contemporary Africa will, in his mind, finally give rise to an African literature.[15] His optimism is excessive. It is by no means certain that literacy is making as much progress as one would hope. Only two-fifths of the young are actually in school, and the percentage of those who will emerge and remain literate is not sure.[16]

Kane is not alone in wishful thinking. In his The Writings of Wole Soyinka, Eldred Durosini Jones assures his readers that Soyinka's primary audience is in Africa. But at the bottom of the same page he admits that the major theatrical works cannot be performed in Africa because of lack of companies, and that Soyinka is regularly excluded from African university reading lists.[17] This is perhaps in part due to a lag in cultural decolonization, but Soyinka is a difficult poet by anyone's standards, and Ali Mazrui's criticism of Okigbo perhaps applies also to Soyinka: Africa may not need poets as hermetic and modernist as Soyinka.[18]

A static and reified notion based upon a false analogy between African and Western social and economic development is concealed in many predictions involving the growth of literacy and literature in Africa. The comparison between the 18th century European novel, a response to and vehicule of the values of the rising middle class, and the African novel, for example the "city novels" of Ekwensi, is built on the assumption that Africa will develop national capitalist markets and industrial patterns akin to those of, say, England.[19] Such turn of events is impossible: sources as diverse as the Club of Rome and the Marxist economist Samir Amin coincide in predicting radically different forms of social growth.[20] If we bear in mind that European social development (and that of the middle class who read and purchase "bourgeois" literature) was based upon the exploitation of international markets which Africa, by definition, cannot exploit, elementary logic confirms their conclusions. But the literati rarely pays attention to economics.

The assumption that massive alphabetization will alter only the number of readers and not the very nature of literary practice is another misunderstanding common to critics who imagine that their own cultural pattern is the one an entire culture is destined to duplicate. Yet another is that traditional African material can be assimilated in the same way that the classical tradition was and that this will insure African-ness. Tchicaya's "literary platform", composed of the themes, plots and stylistic devices of traditional, tribal literature, or Cheikh Anta Diop's reclamation of Egypt as the Greece of Africa, are two variations on this approach.[21]

Traditional material is in fact currently used in this way: the poems of Okigbo and the plays of Soyinka are two striking examples of extremely "literate" use of African tribal culture. Nor would we want to question the vitality and the quality of literature within the elite as it now exists. What must be avoided is the projection of the norms of today into a future which, for numerous economic, political and moral reasons, will be radically different.

The major audience of African literature is thus in the West. And Kane himself speaks of the insidious effects of this state of affairs.

> En effet, c'est à l'Europe que l'écrivain africain s'adresse avant tout. Ce public constitue l'énorme majorité de sa clientèle, public homogène, sensible, qui jouit de traditions culturelles nettement établies. Il pèserait d'un poids redoutable sur la destinée de l'oeuvre, si une sorte de regret de n'avoir pas accordé assez d'attention à l'Afrique véritable malgré quelques siècles de contact, ne le poussait à accueillir favorablement toute oeuvre, pourvu qu'elle soit africaine.[22]

He exaggerates slightly. The Western public is not on the whole even conscious of Africa, and certainly not that guilt-ridden, although the history of the reception of Tutuola's The Palm Wine Drinkard did constitute in the eyes of some Nigerians proof of paternalism.[23] The excessive ethnological explanation and the deliberate use of exotica in the early anglophone novel are certainly some indication of the originally intended audience for these novels. Current critical readings of Achebe place his use of ethnological description within a more aesthetic context: they are seen as carefully crafted irony.[24] But the contemporary African novel is by no means free of its tendency to try to please, or to shock, a Western audience. Whether or not Le Devoir de violence was actually commissioned by Seuil as an African Le Dernier des justes, its sensational and glib pornography (Ouologuem has also written pornography under a pseudonym), are much more appropriate to the Left Bank and the American campus than to an African readership.[25]

Contemporary African literature is in a cul-de-sac. The social and economic circumstances which would enable it to become independent from the West (rapid growth of literacy, the creation of an independent book industry, the crumbling of barriers between the elite with access to the West and the masses without), will also transform it radically. Rapid mass literacy is possible only in a revolutionary situation. An independent book industry can exist only outside of the international capitalist economy and outside other possible "imperialisms" which are even now attempting to insure their access to the potential markets of Africa, and their ideological domination over the Third World. An elite which is Europeanized (not only in values, but in the very style of consumption, including that very expensive object of consumption, the literary one), cannot permit a rupture with the West without losing its privileged status, its means of survival. The barrier between the elite and the masses, the Europeanization of the elite and the marginalization of the masses is, as Samir Amin explains in his L'Accumulation à l'échelle mondiale, a structural necessity of the international capitalist economy.[26] And, as we discuss in Chapter Eight, there are other, non-capitalist forms of elite domination.

African literature is marginal and peripheral in this sense as well. Its creation and consumption is integrated into the international literary system, into metropolitan culture. Amin describes a corresponding economic state:

> La marginalisation des masses est la condition même qui permet l'intégration de la minorité dans le système mondial, la garantie d'un revenu croissant pour cette minorité, qui conditionne l'adoption par celle-ci de modèles de consommation "européens".[28]

It would be unwise to transpose this economic model directly into the literary realm. But like the economic system, the literary system rests upon the differentiation of the elite and the masses, and serves the interests of a European elite and of westernized consumers. The analogy ought not be pushed further. Literary production is not identical to economic production, although publishing is subject to economics.

At the heart of this neo-colonial literary system (and "system" means material and ideological production, sociological and demographic distribution, and the "content" of these works, their literary characteristics, their cultural values), is the impermeability of the barrier between literate élite and illiterate masses. Diffusion moves in one direction, but not in the other. In this case it permits the elite access to the mass culture, but not the reverse.

According to Escarpit in his "Littérature et développement":

> Les vrais problèmes (de massification de la littérature) sont ailleurs, parfois dans les dimensions du groupe linguistique, parfois dans la structure d'une société qui situe l'écrivain dans un autre univers que l'éventuel lecteur populaire. Ils ne peuvent être résolus que dans le cadre d'une politique culturelle d'ensemble, c'est-à-dire d'une politique tout court.[29]

The tragedy of African literature is that it raises mostly faux problèmes. Solutions are not to be found within literary practice itself, for writers have little influence on economics. African literary masterpieces within the modernist mould have their place in international literary history, as does of course the sophisticated, hermetic and elitist literary production of the West of the past centuries. Both are predicated upon separation of the elite and mass cultures against a background of capitalist mass production and consumption.

Literature is a social institution, not a transhistorical category. Its identity must be sought in the activities which comprise it.[30]

FOOTNOTES: THE MARKETPLACE OF THE MANDARINAT

[1] Antonio Gramsci, Gli Intellettuali. Torino, 1949, p. 6.

[2] ibid., p. 9.

[3] Antonio Gramsci, Il Materialismo storico. Torino, 1952, p. 148.

[4] The question "for whom" is of course also Mao Tse-tung's. "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art", Selected Readings. Peking, 1971, pp. 250-86.

[5] John Pepper Clark, The Example of Shakespeare. Evanston, 1970, p. 19.

[6] Gramsci, Gli Intellettuali, p. 10.

[7] See our following chapter "Literature for the Masses?", for a fuller discussion of paraliterature.

[8] Erich Auerbach, Mimesis. Princeton, 1953, pp. 500-1.

[9] Armand Mettelart, "L'Impérialisme culturel: dossier", Le Monde diplomatique, décembre, 1974, p. 9.

[10] For which, see Pierre Jalée, *Le Pillage du tiers monde*. Paris, 1973.

[11] One sketch of the sociology of African literature is Jacques Chevrier, "La Lecture en Afrique noire d'expression française, position du problème", *Afrique littéraire et artistique*, No. 13, pp. 2-8. He has followed this up with the latter chapters of his *Littérature nègre*. Paris, 1974.

[12] Escarpit, "Littérature et développement", in his *Le Littéraire et le social*. Paris, 1970, p. 251.

[13] Robert Escarpit, *La Révolution du livre*. Paris, 1969, p. 79.

[14] René Wellek, *History of Literary Criticism*, Vol. I. New York, 1955, p. 7.

[15] Mohamadou Kane, "L'Ecrivain africain et son public", *Présence africaine*, No. 58 (2e 1966), p. 23.

[16] Barnett and Biggford, *Manual on Book and Library Activities in Developing Countries*. Albany, 1969, p. 10.

[17] Eldred Durosimi Jones, *The Writings of Wole Soyinka*. London, 1973, p.10.

[18] Ali Mazrui, "Meaning versus Imagery", *Présence africaine*, No. 66 (1968), pp. 49-55.

[19] Emmanuel Obiechina, *An African Popular Literature*. Cambridge, 1973, pp. 20-1.

[20] Amin, "Le Modèle théorique d'accumulation", *Tiers-monde*, XII, No. 52 (octobre 1972), pp. 703-26.

[21] Tchicaya U Tam'si, "Engagement et tradition", *Arts d'afrique*, III, 3 (printemps 1970), p. 22. Ch. Anta Diop, "Apports et perspectives culturels de l'Afrique", *PA*, Nos. 8, 9, 10 (juin 1956), pp. 339-46.

[22] Mohamadou Kane, "L'Ecrivain africain...", pp. 14-5.

[23] Harold Collins, *Amos Tutuola*. New York, 1969, p. 20.

[24] Lloyd W. Brown, "Cultural Norms and Modes of Perception in Achebe's Fiction", *Research in African Literature,* III, 1 (1972), 21-35.

[25] See James Olney, *Tell Me Africa*. Princeton, 1974, p. 208, for references to the Ouologuem "plagarism" case.

[26] Paris, 1971.

[28] Amin, "Le Modèle théorique...", p. 711.

[29] Escarpit, _Le_ _Littéraire_ _et_ _le_ _social_, p. 256.

[30] The influence of Escarpit is particularly heavy in these last remarks. But Gramsci was also outspoken about the tendency to reify cultural tendencies, to postulate their autonomous movement through history.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE FOR THE MASSES?

Onitsha market pamphlet literature has the most legitimate claim to mass readership within Africa. Brief, cheaply-printed, brash, they are especially attractive to the Igbo readership of the region immediately surrounding Onitsha. Some have been published in Igbo.[1] They are distributed throughout Nigeria and sometimes find their way elsewhere. Although Alain Ricard has brought the existence of at least one author of French language chapbooks to light, similar phenomena are rare in the remainder of the continent.[2] But despite their intrinsic interest and their role as the most important African "popular literature", their audience is "still numerically small and marginal to the vast majority of the peasants".[3]

These moralizing narratives and etiquette guides are, as all forms of paraliterature, intended to be dispensable. Once read, they are passed on to other readers, left by the wayside. If field research questions the widely-held view that the authors of this literature are in intimate contact with their readers (they are in fact of a higher educational level than the "anonymous little people"), the following point is nonetheless well-taken:

> The success of many of these authors lies in their closeness to their subject and their audience. They know what their audience wants. They too are part of that audience and they share the same problems.[4]

Onitsha literature is, even after the Civil War disrupted the marketplace which was its focus, liquidated much of its audience and fundamentally altered the expansionist and optimistic climate which engendered it, still a profitable venture. And it remains so because it appeals to a given layer of Nigerian society, the newly literate who have embraced the values of the new industrial order. In the view of Obiechina, they are the "vanguard of the industrial, technological civilization in West Africa".[5] We shall return to, to dispute, the fuller implications of this assertion; but it is certainly true that the Onitsha literature is an expression of and vehicule for the values of what appears to be the "little man", an urban proletariat and a nascent middle-class of petty traders and functionaries, the recently and barely literate.

This quality of bare literacy confuses outsiders. On the one hand, they are inclined to look down upon the often clumsy, quaint, and rhetorical English in which the stories are composed, or mock the manifestly moralistic messages they convey. On the other hand, under the charm of what is incontestably an original English,[6] and out of a "kind of regret at having for so long dismissed what was veritably African",[7] Westerners sometimes bend over backward to praise the energy and humour of Onitsha literature. Neither attitude is justified. These pamphlets do demonstrate a certain art: they intentionally contrast language levels within West African English as it is spoken, to develop conflict, dramatic tension, and humour. They are concise in the values they articulate, and therefore reveal much about the milieux which consume them. Yet in spite of their appeal, they remain crude.

Obiechina's study is itself an example of African intellectual attitudes. For all of his criticism of the "narrow class snobbery and an equally narrow conception of literature" which show through in critics of Onitsha literature, he himself retains some of that snobbery, as when he divides the public into thinking and "unthinking" sections, or assumes that his own aspirations towards "modern progress" are fundamentally different and purer than those of either the Onitsha readers, or those who "debase mass taste and depress the spirit through commercially-inspired media".[8] Because of their purported "receptivity to change", their "open, egalitarian, achievement-oriented native culture",[9] the Igbo are often attributed a propensity for rapid economic and cultural growth, and they take a certain pride in this literature. Obiechina is no exception to this not so latent nationalism; he indulges in speculations over the mix of modernism and traditional Igbo elements which has given birth both to Onitsha literature and, since many Nigerian novelists are Igbo, the more "sophisticated" forms of the Nigerian novel.

Most authors and readers of the Onitsha novelettes are of course Igbo. But perhaps the most pertinent "ethnic" fact, either economic or literary, is that Onitsha market literature is, as its name suggests, founded upon given market conditions, upon, in Achebe's words, an "emerging Igbo capitalism".[10] We would not want to confuse the peripheral capitalism practiced in Africa with the international capitalism which is Africa's, and the world's, plague. Yet Onitsha literature is properly identified as a reflection of emerging (petty) capitalism.

Obiechina himself draws the obvious parallels between Onitsha and Grub Street pamphleteers, and their mutual relationship both to the rise of the novel, and of a capitalist bourgeoisie.[11] We have already discussed the reasons Africa cannot develop in the same way that 18th century England did. English capitalism was what it was precisely because there was an African territory, among others, to exploit. The very expansion of English economy and the schooling of its subjects in a certain English culture is in part responsible for the ease with which anglophone Africans draw parallels between themselves, as "developing nations", and the development of the nation which indoctrinated them. Yet there remain elements of truth in the comparison: the novel in the West became a going concern only after a mass audience of readers were integrated into the values of a market economy and became themselves a market for that economy. Onitsha market literature exists, analogously, because there is a market of consumers--of literature and of other products. This market is marginal in international publishing and production of all kinds, and it will of necessity evolve in different directions. But the values conveyed in the literature of the 18th century bourgeoisie, and those of the Onitsha readership are, on the surface at least, comparable. And the temptation on the part of more "sophisticated" Nigerian novelists to project their own genres, values and existence as a social group into a future modelled on English national literary and economic history is great.

Don Dodson's exemplary study of "The Role of the Publisher in Onitsha Market Literature", outlines the economics of the pamphlets.[12] Like Escarpit has urged in the past, Dodson treats literature as an "enterprise", not as a spiritual category independent of history. His findings provide a background for our more traditional socio-literary query: what are the values expressed in these pamphlets?

In point of fact, they are not at all the values of corporate capitalism as we now know it in the West. Indeed, those subject to a different economic system which encourages waste and profligacy, would find them old-fashioned: both self-discipline and the straight-and-narrow path towards personal social advancement are encouraged.

As for the market underlying Onitsha literature, the facts are fairly clear.[13] There are seven interrelated publishers, some of whom are linked by friendship or business interests. They have founded a publisher's guild. They farm out the production of the pamphlets to printers (there are, even after the war, more than a hundred presses in Onitsha).[14] Almost all have themselves dabbled in writing, but usually they simply buy up a manuscript, alter it as they see fit, and publish it under a pseudonym, some of which are not at all lacking in spunk: Highbred Maxwell, Speedy Eric, Strong Man of the Pen. The authors are of various backgrounds, only occasionally have enough capital to publish and profit from what they produce, but are "upwardly mobile". One Ogali A. Ogali used his profits to attend the Ghana School of Journalism and the London School of Cinematography. Others are in law school, and one of the early pioneers of Onitsha literature, Cyprian Ekwensi, graduated on to "serious" novels. More to the point, the public of this literature, the "office messengers, petty traders, band-leaders, students, peasant farmers, unskilled labourers, artisans, white collar workers", but also, in their free time, literary critics,[15] are themselves "upwardly mobile", or believe themselves to be. They are the "most active agents and creative promoters of the industrial order",[16] and are subject to the fashions of that order. Dodson speaks of the topicality of the literature, its use of current events and popular heros, the Congo Crisis, the personality of John F. Kennedy, the Nigerian Civil War (which was almost immediately turned into literature in Iguh's The Last Days of Biafra). This last title is hardly surprising: the Igbo are the major producers and consumers of pamphlet literature.

Two regular themes, love and letter-writing, offer another parallel with 18th century England, whose epistolary novel was based upon the art and status of letter-writing, and their dramatic possibilities. This is the case of such novelettes as Highbred Maxwell's *Our Modern Ladies Characters Towards Boys*, where letters are the hinge of the action, and of guidebooks like, *How To Write Love Letters and Win Girls' Love for Friendship*.

But the most important characteristic of that audience, its adoption of aggressive individualism, is best evidenced by its hero-worship, in particular by the Lumumba and Kennedy myths.[17] Post, in his 1964 study of the image of Lumumba and the Congo Crisis, detected a "growing movement of radicalism" opposed to the status quo in Nigeria.[18] This hardly squares with the facts as we know them a decade later. Although the figure of Tchombe and European imperialism are nominally castigated, the radicalism is purely verbal. Fanon has long since pointed out that African leaders use Pan-Africanism, nationalism and anti-imperialism in not necessarily progressive ways. And the treatment of political figures in the Onitsha chapbooks is much closer to the exploitation of popular prejudice manifested in the Nigerian image of the Congolese in the same pamphlets as a pot-smoking and "fickle and frivolous" people, than it is to progressive political propaganda of any sort.

The hero in Onitsha literature is usually an example of the fruits of individualism and self-application, as is the case in the literate literature of Nigeria.

> Both the popular pamphlet literature such as that of Onitsha market, and the novel are a product of a highly mobile consciousness, a consciousness most actively creative where the importance of individuals is recognized and promoted within the social structure.[19]

Individualism, especially in its moralizing forms, is crucial at the "take-off" stage of development when a group begins to accumulate capital. However, only a minority of these traders or, to use the classic term, the petit-bourgeoisie, is taking off. Onitsha literature, both as an entrepreneurial phenomenon, and as a vehicule for the class culture consistent with such a take-off,is intimately bound up with the needs and moods of that minority.

In Onitsha literature the pursuit of happiness is almost always also economic pursuit. Money is a leitmotif. Plots turn around pounds and shillings (as in Moll Flanders), and the non-fiction pamphlets promise their readers a certain success. Once money has been earned it must be conserved: a penny saved is a penny earned.

> The quest for happiness in the Onitsha Market Literature is, in the final analysis, reduced to the quest by individuals for economic self-sufficiency and for the fruits of economic success. Education is the key which opens the door to this success. Diligence, thrift, sobriety and prudence are the cardinal virtues which continue to keep this door open.[20]

This is hardly surprising, given the connections between individualism, puritanism,and petty capitalism. Petty, entrepreneurial capitalism is of an altogether different ilk from corporate or monopolistic capitalism which encourages self-indulgence and unbridled consumption. But a strange paradox remains. One value transcends money and the accumulation of capital: love conquers all in the pamphlet literature.

Here the Western reader enters upon familiar ground: pulp romances, nurse stories, the various pornographies of the heart which proliferate in the West, are not that alien in spirit and aim from Onitsha romances. Both use love to justify a life-time passed in petty accumulation. This is not the place to discuss romantic love in the West,[21] but in Africa the concept is of recent importation, a by-product of Christianity, the forces of "modernism", and the market economy.

Love is concomitant with "rising" individualism. For women, it is an ideological narcotic which obscures the economic role they play as unpaid producers. Love guarantees exaggerated profits within and thus perhaps the very existence of capitalism. The Onitsha market literature is, to judge by its appeal to masculine stereotypes, and by the misogyny and implicit pornography of certain titles (e.g. Speedy Eric's Mabel the Sweet Honey That Poured), directed largely at a male audience. But love in marriage is not only a tool for male mastery. The connection between romantic love and individualism is a platitude of Western culture history. In Onitsha literature romantic love is likewise the requisite ideological content for a given moment in history. The exception love offers to the habitual rule of money is no more than the proverbial exception which proves the rule. Love in Onitsha literature, in particular in Elizabeth, My Love,[22] is also aligned with modernity, with literacy, with "proper" English, with government and its bureaucracy. It is opposed, by connotation and association, to tradition, to illiteracy, to pidgin, to the non-governmental, and to money. We can best picture the chain of connotations in the following way:[23]

(+)	vs.	(-)
modernity	vs.	tradition
government	vs.	bushmen
literacy	vs.	illiteracy
love	vs.	money

Money and financial concerns are *represented* as backward in *Elizabeth, My Love*. The outside observer can see that the power of the Nigerian government, of the forces of "progress" and of literacy have more to do with money than with love; those immersed in the ideology do not necessarily do so.

The plot plays on a conflict between a young couple, Elizabeth and Ototofioko, who have fallen in love and are determined to marry, and Elizabeth's father, Chief Cookey, who wants his daughter to marry Chief Jaja. The latter figures incarnate traditional, tribal values. But Elizabeth and Ototokioko are firm believers in the force of love.

> Love is a worm [sic] affection and a wonderful thing. It is deep and counts no erros [sic]. It is blind. Love highly contributes to happiness which makes life up-to-date and enjoyable. Making friendship without love is rather just like eating a food without salt. You can't beat love, it is influencial [sic]. (p. 5)

Relating love and modernity (being "up-to-date") is not, it is true, grammatically justified: happiness rather than love makes life up-to-date. The association is nonetheless present, as is that between education, social status, and governmental position in the following declaration by Elizabeth to her father:

> I love all parts of his body. He is a gentleman of no equal, know this now or never. He has personality. He is handsome, healthy, cultured and educated. You can't beat him--unbeatable. He is my taste and what are you talking. My sweetheart Mr. Ototokioko is working under the Ministry of Communications and Aviation. (20-1)

Elizabeth reiterates her lover's governmental status on other occasions (p. 16), but the "boy" remains a hooligan in the eyes of her father, who has another marriage partner in mind, and intends to insist upon the traditional parental power of decision in marriage. His wife, Cecilia, sides with the young lovers, and reprimands him for his uncouth behavior.

> This is never in the list the way to treat somebody. It is offensive to refer to Ototokioko as a thief, hooligan and a drunkard. He is not. Under no circumstances will you beat a person who comes to marry your daughter. (18)

Her English, interestingly enough, is on a par with that of Elizabeth and her government official, not with that of her husband. A defender of modernity, she speaks, however implausibly, more like her daughter than her husband. He and his cohort Chief Jaja are alone in speaking pidgin throughout the play:

> Some time you don go for house of that thief thief boy wey you dey callam Otokioko. That boy wey wey deceive you. Him grade don marry since but he dey still make love love with you. (9)

Contrast of dialect is stock in the pamphlets, especially in the extremely popular Veronica, My Daughter, where another aging chief calls in an outside specialist, Billy Bomber, so named for his word-bombs, to help in his struggle against a modern, literate alliance of mother and daughter. The passage is a delight, an example of the unintentional art of the pamphlets.

> CHIEF JOMBO: My pikin, you hear now my Misisi and Veronica dey talk grammarian for me?
> BOMBER BILLY: Madam, what's the meaning of all the hullabaloo that disturbed my capially and tonsorial artist from discharging his duty efficiently, thus compelling me to have a pedestrian excursion to this place?
> PAULINA: My husband does not want Vero to marry the man of her choice and I feel he is making a sad mistake....
> BOMBER BILLY: You are the person labouring under a delusion and not your husband. I must advice you madam, to let your conversational communications possess a cherified consciousness and cogency, let your entamporaneous discernment and unpermitted expectectation have intangibility, veronese and versity. Avoid pomposity, proticity, verbocity and rapacity.[25]

Elizabeth's less rambunctious response to her father, and her quotation of his pidgin epithets, suggests that more than mere marriage policy separates the two:

> Coming to the question of my friendship with Mr. Ototofioko, it is worong [sic] to refer him as a "thief thief" boy. This damages his reputation. He is a gentleman of no equal. (10)

Ototofioko is more precise and less charitable:

> I am of the opinion that your father's worst disease is his illiteracy. Being that he is not educated as to be able to read some novels and to know about the work of love, what it means and its strength, he foolishly opposes our friendship. (15)

Elaborate and purportedly literate turns of phrase are no proof of Ototofioko's own relative command of English; and the assimilation of literacy itself and the reading of "some novels to know about the work of love" reveals much about the self-image of Onitsha readers. They consider themselves advanced, up-to-date, different from and superior to those of traditional culture insofar as they are literate, and "literary".

Thus the "progressive" alliance of Elizabeth, Ototofioko, and Cecilia labels the personage Chief Cookey prefers as husband for his daughter a "grade one illiterate" (22), "an old man of the old days" (25), a "bushman" (23); even "his clothes are of the olden days"; he is "always dirty" (25). And, as we said, he speaks pidgin. In a word, Chief Cookey and Ototofioko stand in for two social groups within the society. The reader instinctively sides with the latter, with "progress", the State, education, Onitsha literature itself (so that they can "know about the work of love"), and with love.

The denouement suggests the ways in which economics underlies the social milieu. Chief Jaja, incarnation of backward tradition, is also incarnation of wealth, for his bride price is 250 pounds. Ototofioko himself is also still obliged to pay a bride price to assure control of any issue from the marriage, but he can only muster 30 pounds. Chief Cookey refuses to take it until his wife finally persuades him through the telling argument that the Chief, a rich man, ought not create the impression of profiting from his daughter. Otherwise he may earn the name of "money monger" (30). Chief Cookey therefore accepts the marriage of the young couple, and certain curbs upon the use of wealth. He protects his reputation by yielding to love's dominion, but the young couple are thereby freed to aspire to the High Life. The play closes with a cocktail party in the Rendez-vous Hotel given for the couple by one Mr. Dick Belgan, a "bosom friend" and sub-inspector of police. The name Belgan is associated with Europe, as in the facsimile which follows Elizabeth.[25] But there is no need to insist upon the kind of consumption at stake in this final scene. Against a background of highlife music, Elizabeth and Ototofioko promise to "love themselves forever". (39) And the play ends.

Paraliterature is formulaic literature,and were the outlines of Elizabeth, My Love not representative, the above detailed analysis would have no significance. But the same themes are present throughout most of the works, as Obiechina's survey ascertains. Economic success is the ideal of the protagonists, or, in the case of the guidebooks, the advisees. Economic success is equivalent to educational level, and both are the property of those with access to the State, to the national government. Participation in that government (the status of bureaucrat rather than "bushman") is symbol of and actual means to self-fulfillment. Whenever money, more the apanage of the new State and its composite castes and classes than of the traditional tribal systems, is associated with the "olden times", love becomes the modern value contrasted to it. Such legerdemain is useful to a rising elite; it camouflages their actual aims. This exploitation of human sentiment is neither new, of course, nor unique to Africa. It not only reinforces the values we have pictured above in the left-hand column of the schema, individuality, modernity, a certain style of English, but also promotes a "high life" for a minority. The creation of the nuclear family unit of accumulation and consumption, and the parallel destruction of the collectivist values of traditional Africa, is one result of this ideological subterfuge.

Formulas are not always rigid. We explained why a certain ideology of aggressive individualism fulfills the needs of the authors, publishers, and readers of Onitsha literature. The content of Onitsha literature has a _logic_ in social terms: it expresses the desires and prejudices of a social group which aspires to success within the rising national economic order. But there is also a logic _in the form_ this content takes.[26] Romantic love in marriage functions as one among other values in a stable _combinatoire_. The opposition of love to wealth, and the facility with which economics can be whisked out of the public eye is due to the rules of permutation and transformation inherent in binary and manicheistic semiotic systems. This _escamotage_, usually part and parcel of binary ideological systems, is by no means an exclusive property of African or petit-bourgeois ideologies. But Onitsha literature is a salient example of it, and in this it is akin to most paraliterature.[27]

Marc Angenot places paraliterature on a continuum of _ultralittérature/littérature/paralittérature_.[28] Ultraliterature is exemplified by the extremely self-conscious, text-centered literature produced after a rupture between "middle brow" public and literati. Literature tout court plays to the literate but not obsessively literary audience of novels, poetry and plays with a point and a plot, as the common reader would say.[29] Paraliterature is integrated into the entire literary system, and proselytizes values consistent with, if not identical to, those of the literati. In this perspective, paraliterature is an inauthentic subliterature which is attributed to and distributed to, but which actually contributes to the further alienation of, the common man, the "anonymous little people", to take up Obiechina's expression once again. By no means limited to the paraliterary, alienation results from integration into a market economy, and it is no mere chance that much ultra-literature has also raged against a deep but unalterable alienation.

Within the specific conditions prevailing in Africa, Onitsha literature follows this pattern. Obiechina's assertion that the Onitsha audience is the "vanguard of the industrial, technological civilization in West Africa", that the "literate masses have become the most active agents and creative promoters of the industrial order", is undoubtedly correct.[30] But with a nuance. The petty traders and petit-bourgeoisie do in fact promote the values of that industrial system, and aspire to its fruits and direction. Although in a period of monopolistic capitalism the rise of this petit-bourgeoisie and of the nation whose aims it espouses is strictly limited, the international market does need and elicit a number of local subalterns who adopt as well European modes and levels of consumption.

The propagation of pulp literature is in itself not at stake. The Onitsha market offers only marginal profits. It is rather the values inculcated by this literature which are crucial to the development of capitalism: this "literary" class is thus in fact an active, if limited, agent of the new (capitalist) industrial order. Yet this industrial order is not and cannot become as it is portrayed in ideology, for reasons we have already discussed. Obiechina's "literate masses" are not at all representative of the masses; they are "still numerically small and marginal to the vast majority of the peasants".[31] The disdainful reference to the dirty clothes of Chief Jaja is no isolated incident. The rapid development of an elite which looks down on physical labour and those who perform it is indicative of the development of a class consciousness and of another "snobbery".[32] The standards of this "literature for the masses"[33] may well appear to be more "popular" and in conflict with those of the official university literature: the literate look down upon the Onitsha level of literacy. But the literary systems of capitalist economies are, even when apparently the voice of "anonymous little people", the mouthpiece of the bourgeoisie. "Paraliterature", according to its above definition, exists only because "literature" exists. This is not uniquely because the literati constitute a sufficiently large audience to set themselves up in business, as Escarpit implies:

> Mieux valent certainement des romans à la chaîne pour tous
> les lecteurs possibles que quelques lectures de haute qualité

> réservées à une élite. Cultiver les uns et les autres dans des ghettos séparés n'est en tous cas pas une solution. C'est le malheur des pays développés que leur élite intellectuelle est numériquement assez importante pour constituer un marché du livre relativement rentable qui tend à s'autonomiser et à repousser le lecteur "populaire" vers une littérature industrielle.[34]

Nor is the cause a tendency of intellectual elites to exclude coarse and uneducated readers and thereby to establish cultural barriers: the intellectual elite certainly does so, but is only following the lead of a larger class whose hegemony is based upon the ranking of individuals in hierarchies. Both the "popular", the paraliterary audience and the literati have these same premises.

This side of radical changes, alienation seems the lot of the paraliterary audience (be it on the Nigerian or the Western scale). But there is nonetheless relative alienation. The line between the elite and masses in Africa passes "beneath" the readers of Onitsha literature. These latter belong to and are the "most active agents" of the new industrial order. Far better, in Escarpit's words, that literacy make progress where it can, even if this means among a group rising into exploitative economic positions, than that reading be limited to a mandarinat. But the "malheur des pays développés" is also, and in aggravated forms, the "malheur des pays sous-développés" as long as those countries are integrated into the international market economy. That economy co-opts a minority within the latter countries, and assures that this minority adopts Western styles of consumption.[35] Both Onitsha literature and contemporary literate African literature are Western in mode, content, and, in the case of the latter, audience. The two ghettoes which Escarpit laments in developed countries are more and more present within the African elite, the curriculum of African universities representing one, and that of Onitsha the other. But the African masses remain outside of either, and their marginalisation is "the very condition which permits the integration of the minority into the world order.[36]

These marginal masses are also, somewhat less theoretically, the proletariat of Fanon: the wretched of the earth, "sous-alimentés, analphabètes, jetés entre ciel et eau, la tête vide, les yeux vides".[37] The "anonymous little people" who are the audience of the Onitsha literature are, on the other hand:

> Le prolétariat des villes, les artisans et les fonctionnaires, c'est-à-dire une infime partie de la population qui ne représente guère plus de un pour cent. Le prolétariat embryonnaire des villes est le noyau du peuple colonisé le plus choyé par le régime colonial. Il représente en effet la fraction du peuple colonisé nécessaire et irremplaçable pour la bonne marche de la machine coloniale: conducteurs de tramways, de taxis, mineurs, dockers, interprètes, infirmiers, etc. Ce sont ces éléments qui constituent la clientèle la plus fidèles des partis nationalistes et qui par la place privilégiée qu'ils occupent dans le système colonial constituent la fraction "bourgeoisie" du peuple colonisé.[38]

Not much has changed since the colonial times of which Fanon was writing. And it is therefore not surprising that, In Obiechina's words, if we look in Onitsha literature "for an expression of social awareness, of social responsibility, and the values which promote social goals, we search in vain".[39]

FOOTNOTES: LITERATURE FOR THE MASSES?

[1] Emmanuel Obiechina, An African Popular Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973, pp. 14-6.

[2] Alain Ricard, "Francophone Chapbooks in West Africa", RAL, III, 3 (1972), 68-9. Dathorne, The Black Mind, Minneapolis, 1975, p. 169. Aboso in Ghana also produces Onitsha-like works.

[3] Obiechina, op. cit., p. 115.

[4] Donatus Nwoga, "Onitsha Market Literature", Transition, IV, 19 (1965), 29. See Don Dodson, "The Role of the Publisher in Onitsha Market Literature", Research in African Literature, IV, 2(1973),p.172-88.

[5] Obiechina, op. cit., p. 115.

[6] Harold R. Collins, The New English of the Onitsha Chapbooks. Athens, Ohio: African Studies Program, Ohio University, 1968. For more on pidgin see: Bernard Mafeni, "Nigerian Pidgin", in John Spencer (ed), The English Language in West Africa. London: Longmann, 1971, pp. 95-112.

[7] Mohamadou Kane, "L'Ecrivain africain et son public", Présence Africaine, 66 (1968), pp. 14-5.

8 Obiechina, op. cit., pp. 102, 118.

9 Obiechina, ibid., pp. 7-8.

10 Chinua Achebe, in Foreword to Obiechina, ibid., p. x.

11 Obiechina, ibid., pp. 20-1.

12 Research in African Literature, IV, 2 (1973), 172-88.

13 Unless otherwise indicated, Dodson's article is the source for the immediately following.

14 Joseph C. Anafulu, "Onitsha Market Literature: Dead or alive?", Research in African Literature, IV, 2 (1973), p. 166.

15 Obiechina, op. cit., p. 117.

16 Obiechina, ibid., p. 115.

17 Bernth Lindfors, "Heros and Hero-worship in Nigerian Chapbooks", Journal of Popular Culture, 2 (1968), pp. 441-50.
Ken W.J. Post, "Nigerian Pamphleteers and the Congo", Journal of Modern African Studies, II, 3 (1964), 405-18.

Charles R. Larson, "The Kennedy Myth in Nigeria", *Colorado Quarterly*, 16 (1967), pp. 39-45.

18 Post, "Nigerian pamphleteers...", p. 412.

19 Obiechina, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

20 Obiechina, *ibid.*, p. 31.

21 But were we to do so, a good place to start would be the provençal lyric, where love masked numerous ambiguous caste and class relations. See Pierre Bec, *Nouvelle anthologie de la lyrique occitane du moyen âge*. Avignon: Aubanel, 1970, in particular his discussion of Erich Köhler's hypothesis, pp. 36-9.

22 Okenwa Olisah. Onitsha: A Onwudiwe and Sons, n.d. In facsimile in Obiechina, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-237. Pages numbers of excerpts are to the original edition, and are in parenthesis in the text.

23 Umberto Eco, *Le Forme del contenuto*. Milano, 1971, pp. 48-9, is a classic exposition of semantic chains.

24 Donatus Nwoga, "Onitsha Market Literature", *Transition*, IV, 19 (1965), 3d.

25 Page 32 of the facsimile following Elizabeth has a letter from "a Mr. William Belgan (a European)".

26 See the discussion on Eco's notion of "le forme del contenuto", note 23 above.

27 Umberto Eco, "James Bond: une combinatoire narrative", Communications, 8 (1969), pp. 77-93. Eco is concerned not only by the content of a given paraliterary form, but also by its manicheistic mode of presenting that content.

28 Marc Angenot, "Qu'est-ce que la paralittérature?", Etudes Littéraires (Laval), VII, 1 (avril 1974), p. 14.

29 Literary--as opposed to ultraliterary--texts are those whose interest is not their own existence as texts. We have seen literary self-consciousness extended to paraliterature: the readers of Elizabeth, My Love read about themselves reading "novels to know about the work of love". Ultraliterature is nonetheless of a different order: it offers itself as text.

30 Obiechina, op. cit., p. 115.

31 Obiechina, ibid., p. 115.

32 "I began life as a student and at school acquired the ways of a student; I then used to feel it undignified to do even a little manual labour, such as carrying my own luggage in the presence of my fellow students, who were incapable of carrying anything, either on their shoulders or in their hands. At that time I felt that intellectuals were the only clean people in the world, while in comparison workers and peasants were dirty. I did not mind wearing the clothes of other intellectuals, believing them clean, but I would not put on clothes belonging to a worker or peasant, believing them dirty. But after I became a revolutionary and lived with workers and peasants and with soldiers of the revolutionary army, I gradually came to know them well, and they gradually came to know me well too. It was then, and only then, that I fundamentally changed the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois feelings implanted in me in the bourgeois schools". Mao Tse-tung, "Yenan Forum on Literature and Art", in Selected Readings. Pekin: Foreign Languages Press, 1971, p. 255.

33 The original title of Obiechina's An African Popular Literature, before revisions and addition of the facsimiles. Enugu, Nigeria: Nwanwko-Ifejiko and Co., 1971.

34 "Littérature et développement", in Le Littéraire et le social, p. 253.

[35] See, once again, the theory of Samir Amin, discussed above in Part II. "Le Modèle théorique d'accumulation...", *Tiers Monde*, XII, 52 (1972), 703-26.

[36] Amin, "Le Modèle théorique....", p. 711.

[37] Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*. Paris: Maspéro, 1970, p. 143.

[38] Fanon, ibid., p. 64.

[39] Obiechina, op. cit., p. 118.

CHAPTER THREE: "LA CHAIR DE MES FRERES": TCHICAYA'S EPITOME

A difficult and hermetic poet, Tchicaya U Tam'si offers a privileged view upon the political and cultural ambiguity experienced by the African literary elite. Epitomé, his fourth book of poetry, is in part a response to the Congo crisis of the summer of 1960. It is also a presage of what the African intelligentzia as a whole lived through in their first decade of nominal independence. The disappointment and confusion felt by an Armah or an Ouologuem are already latent, and sometimes overt, in Tchicaya's 1960 writings. The first months of legal independence in the Congo were exceptional in their violence and intensity, but neo-colonial intervention, military or otherwise, and the collaboration of a generation of leaders promoting the balkanization of Africa are the salient general characteristics of the last fifteen years.

Tchicaya is political only insofar as he is frank. There are no traces of political doctrine in this poetry, and, having worked for long years for the very United Nations who participated in Lumumba's undoing, he is far from a moralizer. His oeuvre, especially Epitomé, is nonetheless not without political import, and a certain flair for prophecy. Deciphering this political prophecy requires an enormous critical effort: the testament Tchicaya bequeaths from the season he lived in the Congo is part of a much wider poetic statement, and is composed with a very personal technique.

The son of a deputy in the French National Assembly, Tchicaya arrived in France in 1946, and has lived there most of his life. In his own words he was "mauvais garçon" at nineteen, and was quite taken with Rimbaud and Césaire. "Like any old poet", he was a jack-of-all-trades before finally carving out a position in the Parisian literary milieux, and becoming a member of the Radar group.

The critical debate over the differences between négritude and surrealism is now outdated, but still preoccupies some critics. The poetic technique of Césaire and of Tchicaya is, from a purely formal point of view, almost identical with that of the surrealists. What they express in their poetry is not necessarily so.

In the place of the pious platitudes of Senghor, to whom l'écriture surréaliste was useful insofar as it "brought back the African Word", was more religious than psychological,[1] we prefer the distinction which Kesteloot proposed:

> A la différence des surréalistes français, ce ne sont pas les structures de leur propre esprit et de leur propre société qu'ils [les poètes de la négritude] combattront, mais des structures étrangères et un ordre haï, parce que conquérant et oppresseur.[2]

It goes without saying that the "mental structures" of an *assimilé* (and we include Césaire and Tchicaya in this category because they are masters of French language and culture) are at least in part those of the culture which has assimilated them, the culture they have learned to manipulate. But a poetry which calls for mental "de-structuration" *and* de-colonization is in fact different from one calling simply for the former. We are now far enough from the birth of négritude to see it as one historical moment among others. Such is the sense of Tchicaya's "je suis loin du poème nègre", and such is certainly implied in the novels of disillusionment, in the *cri de coeur* of Ouologuem's account of the chronic exploitation of the *négraille* by their fellow Africans. At this remove it also seems clear that négritude and surrealism, related at certain historical and formal points, did indeed have different aims and programmes.[3]

Tchicaya's technique is, on the other hand, modernist, well in the line of French surrealism, and not in the least intrinsically Bantu, like Senghor insisted in his introduction to the 1962 edition of *Epitomé*. Senghor's far-fetched assertion is based upon several assumptions which do not stand up to critical investigation. One cannot speak intelligently, for example, of the sources of a tradition that is in the very moment of its creation. We shall have the occasion to refer again and again to Paulin Hountondji's critique of the "Bantu School" of African philosophy.

> Tout s'est passé comme si la "philosophie africaine" était toujours déja là, identique à elle-même, dans l'âme éternellement immuable de l'Africain, et indépendamment du discours qui la dévoile. Mais ce dernier lui-même se voulait inessentiel et se donnait comme un simple récit, comme le miroir non-déformant d'une réalité préexistente; alors qu'en vérité cet objet lui était contemporain, n'étant autre, en fait, que sa propre création.4

The epistemological and methodological errors committed by the Bantu School are akin to those perpetuated by proponents of the nommo theory. Of legitimate use within the ethnography of Griaule and Dieterlen, for the Dogon among others did in fact have a "nommo theory", this rather murky concept was introduced into the polemic over "Neo-Africain" literature and culture.[5] Céa, in her 1970 introduction to the re-edition of Epitomé, ascribes to the theory that an African poet brings to French poetry the traditional mastery--not of language but--of the Verb, la parole africaine, nommo:

> Dans la poésie occidentale, l'image précède le mot. Dans leurs expérience, les surreéalistes métamorphosent des images données. Dans la poésie négro-africaine, le mot précède l'image, par le pouvoir du verbe. Le poète surréaliste se laisse investir par le verbe. L'inspiration sourd du fond de l'inconscient. Tandis que le poète négro-africain est maître du verbe.6

Tchicaya is of course a Master. His vocabulary is rich and weighty in its precision. His syntax is in fact "unhinged", as Senghor remarked in his own introduction to Epitomé in 1962.[7] But to take these traits as evidence that the poet is master of a parole which conjures up realities more than metaphorically is to lose sight of essential distinctions. There are underlying reasons for such mystifications. An entire generation, the same one which achieved legal independence, and sometimes the very same personalities, were victims of this misunderstanding.

Senghor's text is worth reproducing, in this light:

> Tchicaya est un Bantou du Congo. Je dis: un Bantou. C'est ce caractère qui définit, d'abord, Tchicaya et sa poésie. La poésie de Bantous est une des plus authentiquement africaines. Elle est pure, du moins au Congo, de toute influence arabo-berbère. Et si elle ne l'est pas tout à fait de l'influence pygmée ou khoisan, c'est tant mieux, car les nègres marginaux de l'Afrique centrale et australe sont les plus près des sources.8

The khoisan may or may not be closer to the "sources" of the African tradition, but it was precisely the Bantus who were their first major exploiters. And, since the Middle Ages, defining Africa without full recognition of "Arab-Berber" influence is nonsense. It means for example eliminating the prime candidate for new African vehicular language, Swahili, a fusion of Bantu and Arab. The lack of historical perspective is striking and dangerous to those who let it pass: Senghor is also, let us not forget, president and dictator of a new African state.

Tchicaya's poetry is, like any other contemporary poetry in French, difficult to comprehend. This is not because it is Bantu and the majority of its readers are not.

The principles of "classical" négritude were, however, Tchicaya's starting point. His key image is the tree, "l'arbre de sa vie", sometimes the poet himself plunging his roots into vital soil, sometimes the cross of his crucifixion, sometimes a metaphor for his genealogy, the family tree effaced by colonialism.

Strangely enough, Césaire's Cahier d'un retour au pays natal contains the passage which best sums up Tchicaya's poetic repertoire:

> A force de regarder les arbres
> je suis devenu un arbre et mes longs pieds
> d'arbre ont creusé dans le sol de larges
> sacs à venin de hautes villes d'ossements
> à force de penser au Congo
> je suis devenu un Congo bruissant de
> forêts et de fleuves[9]

Tchicaya formulates his own variety of négritude through numerous subtle permutations and transformations of this passage, and comes to conclusions of which Césaire was himself incapable in 1939. The quest for identity remains their fulcrum:

> d'un certain bois on fit une certaine porte
> Je ne sus plus l'essençe de mon âme
> pour ouvrir cette porte-là
> comme l'eussent fait les pères de mes mânes[10]

At times Tchicaya speaks out against a purely verbal or ideological conclusion to this quest:

> faux suffixes aux racines de mon arbre
> me donnent une sale terminaison (40)

The African is cut off from his past, his essence, his soul, but no mere "ism" or "tude" can replace this loss.

A second trait of "classical" négritude was its violent opposition to European colonialism. Both "essentialist" and Marxist ("prise de position") négritude coincided in this refusal.[11] France, as symbolized by the tricolour, is particularly responsible for the oppression, since Tchicaya was himself a subject of French rather than Belgian colonialism.

> Moi qui ne sais rien
> de l'arbre de ma vie
> mon scandale avait trois couleurs (40)

Church as well as State is called into question, although Tchicaya is drawn towards a certain biblical imagery and to the personality of Christ. "Le Contempleur" sums up this ambiguity, ambiguity sharpened because Tchicaya is both victim of Christianity, and victim like Christ:

> Dis-moi en quelle Egypte mon peuple a ses fers aux pieds
>
> Christ je me ris de ta tristesse
> ô mon doux Christ
> Epine pour épine
> nous avons commune couronne d'épines (61)
> ...
> Tu restes immobile
> Le Congo fend sa peine
> Ah que tu es sale Christ d'être avec les bourgeois (63)

This ambivalence, that of a good many African writers who passed through the mission schools, does not in the least moderate his anger at Europe and his exploiters.

> La mer obéissait déja aux seuls négriers
> des nègres s'y laissaient prendre
> malgré les sortilèges de leurs sourires (38)

But the passivity and complicity of certain Africans implied in the last lines represent a first crack in the ideological edifice of classical négritude. For if Tchicaya is openly solidary with the exploited of the world, he is no longer necessarily so with an entire race. The hypocrisy of public smiles, the same perhaps that Tchicaya had to flash upon his return to Paris in 1960, and that of which Diop wrote in his moving "Le Rénégat", marks a new moment in African literature: treachery comes this time from the direction of African brothers.[12] Loyal to the deepest principles of négritude and Césairean revolt, Tchicaya asserts that négritude can itself be bought out, that treachery is not the exclusive property of Europe. Worse: Tchicaya, "poète depuis six saisons littéraires" (99), is not above marketing négritude himself.

> Depuis il m'a poussé au coeur mille excroissances
> qu'à prix d'or un bourreau marchande à mes fétiches
> --tout mon peuple vit de ce commerce-là-- (37)
> ...
> Je vends ma négritude
> cent sous la quatrain
> Et vogue la galère
> pour les Indes soldées
>
> Ah quel continent n'a pas ses faux nègres
> j'en ai à vendre
> Même Afrique a aussi les siens
> Le Congo a ses faux nègres (65)

Yet while Tchicaya's commentary applies to more than a single continent, it is still animated by a sole passion, the Congo, whose inhabitants the poet recognizes on sight:

> Vous êtes bien de mon pays
> je le vois à ce tic

> que votre âme a aux cils
> et puis vous dansez de tristesse
> vous êtes bien de mon pays (51)

The summer of 1960 weighs heavily in *Epitomé*, but the Congo is an obsession throughout his entire *oeuvre*.[13]

Epitomé cannot however be reduced to a mere denunciation of colonialism in general, and of the events in the Congo in 1960 in particular. Nor does Tchicaya restrict himself to *la chose africaine*. An urban and sometimes extremely Parisian poet, he gives himself over to literary games as subtle as those of his peer Christopher Okigbo, the other important cosmopolitan poet of contemporary Africa. In "Berceuse" for example he weaves references to Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot. Elsewhere is an allusion to the Chinese poet Li Po, who died drunkenly trying to embrace the moon reflected upon water (55). It is moreover difficult to read "Océanes" without thinking of the poem of the Malagasy poet Rabéarivélo "Voici/celle dont les yeux sont des prismes de sommeil".[14] Both are sea poems and as such have something in common, but the elements are strikingly similar, the blocks of salt, the coral, the algae. In each case, however, Tchicaya does no more than suggest parallels between his and other poetry. His is not an allusive poetry, but one with its own passions and centers of gravity. Literary allusions disappear before a too-fixed stare like Eurydice before the eyes of Orpheus.

Tchicaya is a poet in revolt not only against colonialism, but also against the nausea of contemporary life. Influenced by his lifetime in Paris and his surrealist literary background, he shares the ideals of these milieux, and of a certain Western counterculture:

> Parmi ce pus de choses bien faites
> pour voir mon meilleur monde,
> je me greffe aux rétines deux fleurs d'oranger (35)

The Congo crisis is thus no more and no less than a privileged moment in the poetry, an historical moment which becomes a poetic occasion to unite themes implicit elsewhere.

We cannot easily situate the psychological drama underlying Epitomé, give it a precise temporal and spatial frame. Certain passages were written in the Congo, but Tchicaya returned to Paris in November, 1960 where he finished his work. At times this Parisian background rises to the fore:

> Me voici en Europe
> Sans canne à la main
> expansifs la bouche en trompette
> plus gauloise que Jeanne la Lorraine (95)

Frequent references to newspaper headlines (Tchicaya was a sometimes journalist) emphasize the actual distance of events close to the poet's mind.

> On lit à Paris une pièce de Césaire
> Et les chiens se taisaient...
> La presse: Panique à Bruxelles
> Le Congo en est la cause (45)

The first moment of panic in Belgium occurred immediately after independence, and lead to the intervention of the Belgian troops in

July. Tchicaya was actually in the Congo at that moment, and his poems make him seem present everywhere, eyewitness of all events wherever they may be. This ambiguity of locale is fundamental to the poems. The reader is obliged to follow acrobatic leaps of allusion and references, survive in the midst of paradox; the reader partakes of a kind of schizophrenia, that, proper to a colonized intelligentzia, of imagining oneself in two places at once.

Thomas Kanza, a friend, had invited Tchicaya to Léopoldville to become editor of Le Congo. He stayed until the arrest of Lumumba, whom he knew personally (having been introduced by another friend, the Camerounian Moumié). Part of the alienation we sense through Epitomé is no doubt due to poetic effect: the poet is picking up the pieces from an African sojourn which was disastrous. But his alienation is not uniquely that of an intellectual and poet who returned to Paris in a kind of exile; it was shared by Lumumba himself, by his wing of the M.N.C., by all those incapable of controlling the forces of mutiny, of schisms, and of reaction.[15]

These forces take diverse political incarnations, but no political slogans, no names of political leaders, no parties are ever mentioned. Lumumba himself, Kasavubu, Tchombé, and Mobutu pass without mention, but Sainte Anne, whose cathedral is at Brazza across the Congo from Kinshasa, the former Léopoldville, becomes a focal point. She is in part representative of Church and State, in part metamorphosed into a frigid woman who refuses the poet's solicitations, and in part associated with the other woman in Paris who does not understand the strange silences of a poet whose thoughts are of the Congo while he makes love.

> Or face à Kinshasa
> Sainte Anne à son heure critique
> hausse l'échine
> et n'a plus la chair fine du messie
> ni le sang clair du messie (47)
> ...
> J'ai les ongles d'une femme dans ma chair
> Je me saigne pour qu'elle jouisse d'amour
> Mais cachez moi l'image de son dieu
> ce fakir dont la grimace me dessale l'âme
> ...
> Ah que tu es sale Christ d'être avec les bourgeois
> Christ Christ de ma sainte Anne (63)
> ...
> Ma Marie-Madeleine à moi eut nom Annie (64)

Sainte Anne/sainte Anne/Annie is one of the poetic forms the Congo takes.

It is sometimes difficult to trace all the innuendoes of this non-linear poetry which deliberately mingles political, sexual, and religious values. Surrealist poetry snaps the semantic axes which are the armature of our usual daily vision of the world: those of abstract/concrete, general/particular, essence/existence.[16] Time and space coordinates are relegated to a secondary status. Thus the squadrons of parachutists that "in actual fact" came from Kamina in Katanga are introduced into more general imagery, of different time and place, with no contradiction.

> A Kinshasa... de Kamina
> Trois escouades d'une forêt célestre en parachute
> sans fleurs au canon de leurs ramures
> ayant aux bottes la même boue qui absorba
> face à Kin ton triste sang menstruel
> Anne conçois-tu leur diarrhée
> s'ils font des ombres partout
> tous feux éteints? (47)

The three squadrons are converted into poetic material. They acquire emblematic value, like the diverse elements of "Guernica". And this is indeed current practice in modernist art: formal unity takes precedence over the "unities" of time and space which are the base of social convention. The poetic experience seeks to transfigure and rule over non-poetic experience, to become transcendent. What preserves Tchicaya (and Césaire) from the worst of the subjectivism innate in such poetry is that they draw the attention of the reader to particular circumstances in the non-poetic world "outside" of the poem; le pays natal and its afflictions.

Yet the tension which underlines Epitomé is not that affecting the pays natal, but that within the mind of the poet, as he meditates upon the pays natal. Tchicaya does not and does not intend to describe the mechanisms, or even the most blatant effects of neo-colonialism. These are secondary to the larger poetic tableau. To be sure, the reader is tendered numerous images of devastation and carnage:

> Ils sont morts
> à quels signes reconnaîtrai-je à l'aube de leur destin
> le fleuve franc qui charriera leur absence à la mer (39);

and reasonably precise historical allusions:

> Déjà il y eut des miasmes de chair
> de chair plus fraîche sous ton ciel
> baignant l'an 1908
>
> Puis 1959
> De riches météorites
> descendirent sur terre
> à Kin à Kinshasa (48).

But faced with these visions, the poet is more and more ill at ease, in spite of his fierce denunciation of colonialism. He knows that he is himself slow to react, and is, in his indecision, penetrated by inertia, an inertia which he associates with guilt. He speaks of the:

> morts de ma conscience lente...
> Puant cette lenteur, je gagne à triche-coeur (35)

And, safely sheltered from the violence, he utters a mea culpa:

> Je dîne d'un plat de viande ce soir
> pourquoi n'est-ce pas la chair de mes frères
> en holocauste? (48)

But the question and his identification with his brothers in catastrophe is moot, for if the poet is and dies at Kinshasa, he is also alive and well, in Paris, making his bed:

> De Kamina à Kin trois de leurs escouades
> font des fleurs fond des feux ni feux ni fleurs n'enchantent
> J'enferme mon corps dans trois tours de flammes
> Je trahis mes orgueils pour d'appétits sanglants
> L'été sur ma conscience a plus de poids que voix
> Mes morts, mon fleuve amer, mon jourdain, ma savane
> Refaire au jour le jour son lit délivre l'âme
> Quelle couleur de draps choisir pour mon sommeil
> Je meurs à Kinshasa sans feux ni fleurs impur. (45)

"Impur" is masculine singular. The poet has History on his conscience. He is impure, perhaps himself "faux nègre".

To be victim and executioner, African and Parisian, that is the question in Epitomé. The poetic persona must be imagined as imagining. Reflection, turning back on oneself, is the basic motif of the poems which, even formally, fold back in on themselves, the same phrases and tags reoccurring, interlocking, and ironizing one another. Duality, paradox and ambiguity are the burden Tchicaya decries, but stoically bears. The poems never cease denunciation of colonialism, but the poet and his peers are associated more and more directly in the reason of his times.

> Des catastrophes fruitées au silence
> comme on les aime dans les souvenirs d'enfance
> et une pluie grise suffisent à tous les rêves
> me contraignent à ce besoin d'être faussaire
> saintement sicaire
> malgré l'équinoxe
> malgré moi
> malgré les sortilèges des sourires
> de mes frères d'obéissance nègre (42)

Epitomé is a résumé of mutual treason,

> "je compte plus d'un judas sur mes doigts que toi" (61)

and all of its motifs converge around this theme. Its two antagonists are the figure of Sainte Anne/Annie/l'Eglise/l'Europe, and the "frère d'obéissance nègre", "un faux nègre". The two are united in a passage which evokes simultaneously the Christian imperative of turning the other cheek, and the central emblem of the poet, the tree, his genealogy, his roots, but also Calvary.

> Mes joues étaient toute ma dignité
> je donne l'une à ta joue,
> femme,
> sale d'une couleur de trois deniers
> qui m'ont trahis.
> Je donne l'autre à ta main sale,
> frère,
> sale d'une couleur de trois deniers
> Mes joues comme deux collines
> où l'arbre de mon rire eût poussé (52)

Such passages demonstrate as well that Tchicaya is profoundly affected by Christian ideology, however scathing he may be towards it.

The poems do not close upon a denouement in which the tensions pulling at the poet relax, but it is nonetheless true that the farther we move from the passages, principally at the beginning of the book, where the Congo is the overt subject matter, the more calm the tone becomes, especially in "Berceuse" and "Fragile". The poet already avowed in earlier passages that he was exhausted by the continual "scandals" he lives through.

> Assez de scandale sur ma vie
> Je ne verrai plus mon sang sur leurs mains
> J'oublie d'être nègre pour pardonner cela au monde
> C'est dit qu'on me laisse la paix d'être Congolais (57)

The trade-off will not be accepted by History. Only within universal and literary contexts, in "Berceuse" with its traditional praise to the Mother, its literary allusions to Shakespeare, can the poet reconcile himself with History.

> Et maintenant le plus terrible reste à faire
> aller jusqu'au fond du chemin
> connaître l'ombre pure par abstraction de moi-même
> être le ver dans chaque fruit finissant
> servir de plancton à l'Histoire (70)

Only in literary rite can the poet attain purity:

> Ne tardez pas
> je peux être utile
> j'ai déjà refait mes ongles
> rasé ma tête
> je suis propre devant la nuit (78)

There is, clearly then, much ambivalence in Epitomé. On the one hand, the poet does not at all spare Europe from attack, on the other he is himself a target of his own criticism. The admission of guilt is a response to the neo-colonial massacre of 1960, to the bourgeois and Christian slave trade: "je suis faussaire, sicaire". Hence the equivocation and paradox of certain passages. Love, for which the poet bled while making love (36), disorders and confuses. The sea, seat of spiritual adventure, is also the by-way of slavery. Christ himself tortures and crucifies. And the smiles of the African brothers have two aims, the first legitimate, to escape European domination, the second, to camouflage their own responsibility and connivance.

Tchicaya has no such sortilege: the subject of Epitomé is precisely the ambiguity of an African intellectual faced with one of history's more blatant and successful neo-colonial operations. He is opposed, as is, in theory and at a safe distance, world public opinion.

> ...et la conscience du monde se tait avec moi
> sur le drame de Léopoldville (41)

The scandal of his life began, however, in history, with colonialism, and the poet can find no surcease in literary ritual. Tchicaya cannot distinguish himself completely from the colonial powers. He spits into the Seine, "comme tout bon poète".

But Tchicaya was among the first African writers to disavow the manicheism of classic négritude in which the paired terms black/white and exploited/exploiting were isomorphic.

Tchicaya is frank in yet another way. His audience is and is intended to be a very limited one, as anyone who tries a hand at his poetry can verify.

> Je pense que l'écrivain que je pourrais être; que je suis peut-être militerait plutôt pour trouver l'intimité la plus stricte auprès de 200 lecteurs et leur communiquer ce que je pense être le message, plutôt que d'aller le dire sur une place publique.[17]

He has no illusions about the ultimate effects of his writing and is, in his isolation, of a perfect modesty, and superior in this way to many other African writers, whose visions of their own impact upon History only serve, in many cases, to cloak their impotence and complicity.

We shall have the occasion again and again to remark that isolation within an elite culture is concommitant with neo-colonialism, is a structural necessity of it. Tchicaya is, and is aware that he is, a product of those structures.

Let us admit that this is only one reading among many possible of

Epitomé. Surrealist poetry turns the critics into Tantalus: every reading leaves aside a tempting and reproaching surplus which cannot be integrated at any effort. And in this very state of affairs, at the very centre of the modernist literary experience, we find a final confirmation of our reading of Tchicaya.

It is no accident that a certain African elite prefers poetry which not only allows for but thrives on ambiguity: The surrealist illusion lends itself to the hide-and-seek of the intelligentsia, however sincere it may claim to be. Mere avowal of guilty conscience changes little if the four dimensions are also shattered. The relationships of force between classes (and therefore the true causes of the crisis which so affected Tchicaya) remain vague.

In this sense Epitomé is a faithful reflection of the Congo crisis, neo-colonial intervention par excellence. The mystification in Congo-Kinshasa[18] is paralleled by the undeniable obscurity and difficulty of Epitomé. Tchicaya and his readers are twice-over victims of neo-colonialism, and twice-over its executants.

Without associating ourselves too closely with Fanon, whose faults we shall soon discuss, it is still interesting to put Epitomé in the following light:

> Il semble exister une sorte d'organisation interne, une loi de l'expression qui veut que les manifestations poétiques se raréfient à mesure que se précisent les objectifs et les méthodes de la lutte de libération. Les thèmes sont fondamentalement renouvelés. De fait on trouve de moins en moins ces récriminations amères et désespérées, ces violences épanouies et sonores

> qui, somme toute, tranquillisent l'occupant. Les colonialistes ont, dans la période antérieure, encouragé ces tentatives, leur ont facilité l'existence. Mais cette situation ne peut être que transitoire. En effet le progrès de la conscience nationale dans le peuple modifie et précise les manifestations littéraires de l'intellectuel colonisé. La cohesion continuée du peuple constitue pour l'intellectuel une invitation à dépasser le cri.[19]

Epitomé is *poésie de cri*, however *intimiste* it may be, for it is a refinement, elaboration and a subtle variation upon the theme of négritude.

We share with Fanon and others (for example the humanist Ali Mazrui who criticized Okigbo for his hermeticism)[20] the "trans-aesthetic" criterion that poetry *ought* to move toward simplicity and directness. But the Fanonian perspective and others of the same ilk have rarely gone beyond the moralizing stage. If the poetry of Tchicaya appears, in the above context, to be only a transition point in a process which shall be ultimately liberating, this is not because the poet chose to differ liberation. If his poetry is as obscure as the official version of the events which inspired it, is this not perhaps because Tchicaya is himself, as he claims, crucified victim of History? Modern poetry is not a plot.

To classify Tchicaya's poetry as neo-colonialist, as we are doing, is not so much to accuse him of treason--a treason to which the poet admits. It is rather to recognize and name the circumstances which produced it. It is a periodization.

Tchicaya's poetry corresponds, culturally, to the generalized inaccessibility of goods and political power which is the very definition of neo-colonialism. There is very little that poetry can do to change this state of affairs.

FOOTNOTES: "LA CHAIR DE MES FRERES"

[1] Senghor, quoted in L. Kesteloot, Ecrivains noirs. Bruxelles, 1963, p. 92.

[2] Kesteloot, ibid., p. 52.

[3] Kesteloot's Ecrivains noirs is the accredited history of the period.

[4] J.P. Hountondji, "Le Problème actuel de la philosophie africaine", Contemporary Philosophy, IV, R. Klibansky (ed.) Firenze, 1971, p. 613.

[5] Griaule's Dieu d'eau, Paris, 1948, is anthropologically interesting. But those who turned his works to their own ends often went off the track. See Janheinz Jahn, Muntu. New York, 1961.

[6] Honfleur, 1970, pp. 14-5.

[7] Tchicaya U Tam'si, Epitomé. Tunis, 1962, p. 8.

[8] Senghor, ibid., p. 8.

[9] Aimé Césaire, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal. Paris, 1968, p. 56.

[10] Tchicaya U Tam'si, Epitomé. Honfleur, 1970, p. 40. From now on page numbers, in parenthesis, refer to this edition.

[11] See the lucid L.-V. Thomas, "Panorama de la Négritude", Actes du Colloque sur la littérature d'expression française, Dakar, 21-29 mars, 1963, Université de Dakar, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, 1965, pp. 45-101.

[12] Diop, "Le Rénégat", Coups de pilon. Paris, 1973, p. 29. Wole Soyinka's Dance of the Forest, Cambridge, 1963, also leaps to mind.

[13] In the earlier Feu de brosse. Honfleur, 1970, the image of the poète-fleuve dominates.

[14] Rabéarivélo, "Voici" in Clive Wake (ed.), An Anthology of African and Malagasy Poetry in French. Oxford, 1965, p. 31.

[15] For an explanation of this incapacity, see J.P. Sartre, "La Pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba", Situations V. Paris, 1964, pp. 194-253.

[16] The concept of semantic axes is elaborated at great length in A.J. Greimas, Sémantique structurale. Paris, 1966.

[17] Tchicaya in Per Wästberg (ed.), The Writer in Modern Africa. New York: Africana, 1968, p. 30.

[18] See C.Kamitatu, La Grande mystification du Congo-Kinshasa. Bruxelles, 1971. Robert Cornevin, Histoire du Congo. Paris, 1966. Michel Merlier, Le Congo de la colonisation à l'indépendence. Paris, 1962.

[19] Frantz Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre. Paris, 1970, pp. 169-70.

[20] Ali Mazrui, "Meaning versus Imagery in African poetry", Présence Africaine, 66 (1968), pp. 49-55.

CHAPTER FOUR: IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE

Nothing seems more natural than coalition with those who share one's language, customs, or appearance. Political rhetoric has long capitalized upon this leaning, and "nationalist" ideologies in Africa are no exception. Articulated philosophies of identity are forged by a leisure caste with free time and rhetorical training and are, among other things, *cautions* for concentration of authority in a political body.

> Ogni gruppo sociale, nascendo sul terreno originario di una funzione essenziale nel mondo della produzione economica, si crea insieme, organicamente, uno o più ceti di intelletuali che gli dànno omogeneità e consapevolezza della propria funzione non solo nel campo economico, ma anche in quelli sociale e politico.[1]

The peculiar status of the Nation in Africa makes, however, for several variations upon this pattern, not the least important of which is that the rhetoric of European nationalism carries on--out of a kind of semiotic momentum--into this new and different sphere. The new African nations are not centered upon themselves, but are bound through economic and military force to other centres. As their balkanization proceeded, the new elites, originally Pan-African, reduced the scope of their ambitions.[2] African nations were created only after the international bourgeoisie had reproduced itself on African soil, only after a state elite of one allegiance or another was born. This process is conventionally described as evolution and assimilation into an "advanced" and technological culture: Western culture almost always poses questions of authority and domination in terms of cultural values.[3] Once assimilés or evolués had internalized the hierarchical principles, in particular Western economic and political techniques, the mere formation of independent nations was no longer of consequence.

The acquisition of the metropolitan languages also meant the acquisition of metropolitan rhetoric and ideology, not because there is something intrinsically technocratic or hierarchical in English or French, but because the experiences prerequisite to language learning are an integral part of "assimilation". There is a mode of rhetoric and of ideology which is particularly suited, but not exclusive, to a neo-colonial elite; this mode is not a matter of specific cultural values, but of the manner in which they are handled, and both the nature of the values and the manner in which they are handled veil other more significant information.[4]

> Il messagio stesso è diventato lo strumento ideologico che maschera tutti gli altri rapporti. Abbiamo l'ideologia come falsa coscienza. Dal punto di vista semiotico abbiamo un messagio sclerotizzato che è diventato unità significante di un sottocodice retorico. In questo caso il messagio nasconde (anziché comunicare) le condizione che doveva esprimere.[5]

False consciousness, which can be formally described as "fetishized" rhetorical figures, is directly dependent upon a division of roles into those who philosophize and those who do not. Marx attributed this historical origin to idealist philosophies in general:

> ... von diesem Augenblicke an kann sich das Bewusstsein wirklich einbilden, etwas anders als das Bewusstsein der bestehenden Praxis zu sein, wirklich etwas vorzustellen, ohne etwas Wirkliches vorzustellen--von diesem Augenblicke an ist das Bewusstsein imstande, sich von der Welt zu emanicipieren und zur Bildung der "reinen" Theorie, Philosophie, Moral etc überzugehen. 6

This self-same dichotomy holds within neo-colonial situations too; "pure" African philosophy conjures up an effect of change, but is in the final analysis a mere rearrangement of the terms of Western cultural history. The very expression assimilé was often pejorative, but bourgeois ideological modes have penetrated further than first appears: mere thematic rejection of Europe is not in the least proof of independence.

Binary ideological patterns are unique neither to neo-colonial elites, nor to the West, nor even to political discourse. Group identification is itself a matter of designating outsiders, foreigners, Others.

The connection between a social, political or psychological sense of identity and the purely formal operations of conjunction and disjunction is not completely fortuitous. Identity implies a difference between two terms, just as difference suggests a common ground of identity between two contrasted items, else they could not be considered at the same time.[7] A group exists in function of its boundaries against the non-group.

Neo-colonial ideologies exploit the rhetorical figures implicit in group identity, and project an illusion of change. But the mere masking of elite privilege is only a side-effect of a more important phenomenon: the very existence of groups, of classes, of privilege and of hierarchy is related to the differentiation of two poles, two terms in opposition.

We obviously cannot pursue this question in the present context. Our subject is the polarity of certain African ideologues, in particular, of Senghor, Cheikh Anta Diop and the "Bantu School" of African philosophy. But they are not alone in resorting to polar figures of speech. Almost all African writers offer at least some examples of an "inversion" of Western values.

Inversion of values is systematic in the theories of négritude, especially in the essays of Senghor, and is a major creative principle of the poetry of both Senghor and Césaire. According to Sartre the language of African poetry strikes a French reader because clichés are commuted into their reverse.

> Ce n'est donc pas seulement le propos que le noir a de se peindre qui me paraît poétique: c'est aussi sa manière propre d'utiliser les moyens d'expression dont il dispose. Sa situation l'y incite: avant même qu'il songe à changer, la lumière des mots blancs se réfracte en lui, se polarise et s'altère. Nulle part cela n'est plus manifeste que dans l'usage qu'il fait des deux termes couplés "noir-blanc" qui reçouvrent à la fois la grande division cosmique "jour et nuit" et le conflit humain de l'indigène et du colon. Mais c'est un couple hierarchisé: en le livrant au nègre, l'instituteur lui livre par surcroît cent habitudes de langage qui consacrent la priorité du blanc sur le noir. Le nègre apprendra à lire "blanc comme neige" pour signifier l'innocence, à parler de la noirceur d'un regard, d'une âme, d'un forfait. Dès qu'il ouvre la bouche il s'accuse, à moins qu'il ne s'acharne à renverser la hierarchie. Et s'il la renverse *en français* il poétise déjà: imagine-t-on l'étrange saveur qu'auraient pour nous des locutions comme "la noirceur de l'innocence" ou "les ténèbres de la vertu"? [8]

White comes to mean death, claustrophobia, exile. Black acquires the connotations of life and vitality, of beauty, of spontaneity, as in Senghor's famous:

> Femme nue, femme noire
> vêtue de la couleur qui est vie

Camara Laye's novel *Le Regard du roi*[9] plays continually upon such a reversal of stereotype. Laye's hero is a European in exile in Africa, and his Kafkaesque meanderings make sense only because of an *écart* from European convention. Clarence is white, and naive. Wisdom is African, not European. Incapable of integration into the schematized African society in which Laye places him, Clarence accepts the most humble of all occupations, he becomes a stud in the service of an impotent chieftain. This is itself a further inversion of cliché: the European is reduced to the sexual performer, the purely sexual and sensual being. The novel is a series of contrasts of this sort, and its epigraph lends yet another, the contrast between Laye and Kafka. Unlike The Castle, Le Regard du roi evokes a closed, allegorical universe. Clarence is embraced by the King, he achieves salvation. A definitive reading of the book is possible. Despite an array of metaphysical alternatives, the symbolism is firmly tied to a social situation, that of decolonization. Kafka's novel on the other hand is open-ended, of difficult interpretation. The very contrast between an European novel proposing only insecurity and incertainty, and an African one, whose universe has a definite aim, is only another of the many moving through its pages.

Most of the novels of the fifties and early sixties touch upon the problem of cultural conflict, a theme which lends itself easily to reversal of European racist stereotypes. The typical plot[10] turns around the encounter of the young African with the complex and materialistic culture of Europe. In L'Aventure ambiguë, Sambo Diallo, a Muslim imbued with an intense and austere religiosity, goes away to Europe, and encounters the brutal materialism of the West.[11] The result is a conflict of mentalities, on quasi-Hegelian principles, in which Sambo loses the security and wisdom of his youth. An African, representing the spiritual and positive principles of the universe, becomes corrupted by European materialism. This "flip-over" of Western convention is canonized in the mainstream of African literature.

Le Devoir de violence, highly praised at its appearance and thereafter dragged into numerous critical disputes over its originality and sources,[12] is a further step in the dialectic. It is the story of, not Africains, not noirs, not even of nègres, but of the négraille. "African" swings from positive back to the darkest of negatives. African scholars, not surprisingly, manifest a similar tendency. Egypt becomes the Greece of Africa in the works of the cultural historian Cheikh Anta Diop.[13] His cultural paradigm is almost exactly the same as the traditional European one, as we shall see later.

> Diop proceeds in the field of scholarship in the same fashion as Léon Damas, by reversing the hierarchy established by the colonizer, without contesting the basis on which it was founded. 14

Damas, one of the founders of négritude with Césaire and Senghor, is noted for the violence of his rejection of Europe; his poetry is much more complex than this simplified view would allow, but embedded in his world view are numerous figures of the kind we are discussing:

> Et les sabots
> des bêtes de somme
> qui martèlent en Europe
> l'aube indécise encore
> me rappellent
> l'abnégation étrange
> des trays matineux
> repus
> qui rythment aux Antilles
> les hanches des porteuses
> en file indienne
>
> Et l'abnégation étrange
> des trays matineux
> repus

> qui rythment aux Antilles
> les hanches des porteuses
> en file indienne
> me rappellent
> les sabots
> des bêtes de somme
> qui martèlent en Europe
> l'aube indécise encore. 15

Not only are Europe and the Africanized Antilles[16] in contrast, but the poem itself is a nearly perfect formal example of "inversion" (a-b-c; c-b-a).

Négritude itself often appeared as a kind of antithesis, and at a certain level it was indeed so: "Le concept de négritude était l'antithèse affective sinon logique de cette insulte que l'homme blanc faisait à l'humanité".[17] Sartre also put négritude in an inverse relationship to European philosophy:

> ... le nègre, nous l'avons dit, se crée un racisme anti-raciste. Il ne souhaite nullement dominer le monde: il veut l'abolition des privilèges ethniques d'où qu'ils viennent; il affirme sa solidarité avec les opprimés de toute couleur. Du coup la notion subjective, existentielle, ethnique de *négritude* "passe", comme dit Hegel, dans celle--objective, positive, exacte--de *prolétariat*. En fait, la Négritude apparaît comme le temps faible d'une progression dialectique: l'affirmation théorique et pratique de la suprématie du blanc est la thèse; la position de la Négritude comme valeur antithétique est le moment de la négativité. Mais ce moment négatif n'a pas de suffisance par lui-même et les noirs qui en usent le savent fort bien; ils savent qu'il vise à préparer la synthèse ou réalisation de l'humain dans une société sans races. Ainsi, la Négritude est pour se détruire, elle est passage et non aboutissement, moyen et non fin dernière. Dans le moment que les Orphées noirs embrassent le plus étroitement cette Eurydice, ils sentent qu'elle s'évanouit entre leurs bras. 18

Senghor had reservations about the implications of all this,[19] and those like him who insisted that négritude was an unchanging and eternal Weltanschauung do not fit at all into Sartre's framework. Senghorian négritude is in fact end, not means. Senghor was formulating a political as well as cultural ideology and could not accept that négritude was contingent. We shall see that it certainly was so in its internal principles, but Senghor never missed an occasion to reify the principle of racial identity, and extend it to all Africans and "neo-Africans", those of the diaspora.[20] His introduction to Tchicaya's Epitomè is one example.[21] That to the critical study by Sylvia Washington Bâ is another:

> Bien sûr, l'on pourra dire que, femme noire, elle n'avait eu qu'à descendre en elle-même, aux sources de la Négritude, pour retrouver les sources du poète Senghor : ses sentiments, ses mythes, et les images qui les portaient, voire ses idées. Car ils sont les mêmes, non seulement les sentiments mais les idées, de tous les Nègres ségrégés, affamés, humiliés, mais qui revendiquent, dans un cri inextinguible, leur dignité d'homme. 22

Despite the last few phrases, which are on the surface close to Césaire's assertion that the common denominator among blacks was the colonial experience in one form or another,[23] Senghor's tendency to idealize the "sources" of the poet and of an entire civilization (of which he soon took partial political command) stands out. Nor is it surprising that Senghor's mystified ideology was, apart from being based upon an inversion of European cultural ideals, attributed to the African people as a whole. This is a classic example of a bourgeoisie taking itself as universal.

The Soviet critic Krassov describes the process underlying this assertion of universality as one of attraction towards Europe, on the one hand, and "the People" on the other.

> The concepts of "cultural personality" have not existed since time immemorial, but came into being only after the society had undergone a period of "Europeanization", which consisted in the zealous assimilation of European culture in its enlightened, liberal-bourgeois forms. As a rule this Europeanization affected a narrow educated stratum, causing it to break away from its own backward population and simultaneously to be debarred from the much coveted European society by a system of prejudices. After a period of romantic rejection of and flight from the West, this intelligentzia tried to rediscover their own identity by establishing a new solidarity with their people.[24]

For some this solidarity was more than verbal, it is true. Fanon's development through négritude into a radical affirmation of the African masses is one example. But, for most, solidarity with the people meant the use of reified cultural forms, the outward garb of a reconstructed tradition itself in rapid evolution. Moreover, Western habits of consumption, discourse and economic relations perpetuated the alienation and sapped the determination even of those sincere in their desire to side with the African peasant. Political co-option and economic integration ("neo-colonialism"), guarantees that this gesture towards the people, this retour aux sources, remains at best solely utopian. Fanon, who had travelled down that road, was lucid in his descriptions of these "mésaventures", and his critique holds true: the rhetoric of négritude (and of most contemporary African leaders) is obscurantist whenever it is carried on beyond a precise moment in history, the overturning of Western racism in the minds of its victims.

L.V. Thomas' distinction between essentialist négritude and prise-de-position négritude is therefore crucial:

> Cet éventail de définitions nous permet déjà d'apercevoir une Négritude-essence exprimant la spécificité nègre sur le plan psychologique, biologique ou culturel et une Négritude-prise de position, attitude de réhabilitation ou de combat[25]

Senghor almost always belongs to the former category, for although he has often written politically,[26] he predicates his political ideology upon the biological and psychologically innate *difference* of the African from other races. Césaire, on the other hand, and most other Marxists of one shade or another, belong in the second category, those to whom négritude was intended to combat oppression and rehabilitate those who had internalized European racism, those for whom, in Sartre's words again, négritude was destined to "pass" into the concept of a proletariat. Sartre's assessment is accurate therefore only for those who made the leap from an ethnic to a class category, among them Césaire, Jacques Roumain, and René Depestre, Fanon, Ousmane, Ngugi. Senghor, and others under heavy religious influence, Ch. Hamadou Kane and A. Hampta Bâ, did not. Moreover, the entire debate, the very passage of "subjective" race to "objective" class concepts took place within the ideology of an elite. Sartre's analytical tools were not as sharp in 1947 as in 1960, after he had written *Critique de la raison dialectique*. His much more subtle analysis of the political thought of Lumumba, places the ideological formulas of an elite ("un jacobinisme petit-bourgeois"), including the very concept of class, within a class context. This latter analysis makes it seem that even "progressive" négritude, the ideology of evolués in search of an alliance with the people, was destined "to pass", the only two viable positions being for the moment that of the African bourgeoisie, which in order to acquire a certain authority had to abandon the Congo to imperialism, and that, still in its birth pains, of the proletariat.[27] Yet even Sartre's 1947 analysis represented a step forward, in the same way all materialist ideologies, even "vulgar" ones, do. In contrast with the mechanistic and circular logic of Senghor, who merely inverted the terms of European philosophy, Sartre, Fanon and others transformed the field of discourse, sought out terms more universal than race.

Senghor's theories are generally regarded as "antiracist racism", and the original forms of that racism are good places to go looking for the code which Senghor inverted. A recognizably stable pattern of literary stereotypes attests to its existence, and studies upon these stereotypes are currently proliferating.[28] Many levels of expression are involved, colloquial speech and literary works, even presumably purified and objective scientific thought. The work of Lévy-Bruhl, which was the last word on the non-Western experience during the twenties and thirties, the period of time when France and England were aggrandizing their hold on Africa, and waves of Primitivism swept modern art, had a great influence upon Senghor, as did most of French culture in the twenties and thirties.[29]

> Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's studies of non-Western forms of experience and knowledge furnished Senghor with a conceptual framework for his description of the Negro African Mind. His controversial differentiation between Western man's "sight-reason" (la raison-oeil), and the Negro African's "touch-reason" (la raison-toucher) is based on Lévy-Bruhl's distinction between Western logic and "primitive" logic in La Mentalité primitive. 30

Lévy-Bruhl always asserted that no hierarchy was intended, that non-Western reason was just as valid as Western reason. But the "law of participation"(according to which "la mentalité primitive ne s'astreint pas avant tout, comme la nôtre, à éviter la contradiction"),[31] conforms to the premises of European racism: that there is something essentially different about non-Westerners. Senghor took up this position, and reversed it, claimed that there was in fact a difference in nature, but that the Western way of thinking was the negative one.[32]

Imperial ideologies in the past also debased the non-citizen, the subject Other. But this Western imperial ideology was implicated in other prejudices, in particular the role the opposition between black and white plays in the entire culture. The European image of the African developed at a time, furthermore, when science and intelligence were equated, when vulgarized Darwinism depicted Europeans as the most evolved from the lower primates. The inevitable result was the total demeaning and dehumanization of the African, who had first been slave, then subject. The response of Senghorian négritude, which was not unrelated to the primitivism which has seduced Western elites from time to time (a preference for the simple as opposed to the complex, the natural as opposed to the civilized, the rural as opposed to the urban),[33] was to invert these values without altering their binary relationship.

Let us represent some of these values in a connotative chain similar to Eco's.[34]

(+)	vs.	(-)
Europe	vs.	Africa
machine	vs.	soil
science	vs.	poetry
reason	vs.	emotion
culture	vs.	nature

There are many ways to pass from one term to another. An extremely large number of connotations is possible, and the arbitrary representation of this particular chain should not be taken as definitive, although it does reveal certain key traits of bipolar ideologies. The *axiological super-connotation* (*iperconnotazione assiologica*),[35] the positive or negative "charge" at the head of each file, dominates all the terms which fall under it. Of course poetry, to a European poet, would not be negative. He would likely give priority to emotion, to nature, to the soil. But when the opposition Europe/Africa is the "head" of the chain, then these latter terms are necessarily negative, or at least the opposite of the value accorded Europe. A European in revolt against his culture, and in search of the exotic, could easily accept the values promoted by Senghor.

A single link in the chain can be represented in a different way, as Greimas does.[36]

$$\frac{A}{\text{non-A}} = \frac{B}{\text{non-B}} \quad \text{or, "invested":} \quad \frac{\text{nature}}{\text{culture}} = \frac{\text{poetry}}{\text{science}}$$

We shall call such relationships *analogies of antonyms*, leaving aside the question of the possible varieties of antonyms.[37] Either of the two above schemes represents an ideological code, a relatively "strong" code, and for two reasons: simple opposition of polar terms lends itself to redundant rhetoric; beyond this, the super-connotation of the chains, or the forces which align Nature with Poetry, and not with Science (an alignment which is, after all, possible), orients the terms, and guarantee their reproduction, their redundancy.[38] The analogy of antonyms is a common feature of ideology throughout the world, but their precise content is a function of the specific ideology in place.

Senghor was able to effect a slight change in Western racism to produce what appeared, at a certain moment in history and to a certain class, a radical departure from that system:

> On l'a dit souvent, le Nègre est l'homme de la nature. Il vit traditionnellement de la terre et avec la terre, dans et par le *cosmos*. C'est un *sensuel*, un être aux sens ouverts, sens intermédiaires entre le sujet et l'objet, sujet et objet

> à la fois. Il est d'abord sons, odeurs, rythmes, formes et couleurs. Il sent plus qu'il ne voit: il se sent. C'est en lui-même, dans sa chair, qu'il reçoit et ressent les radiations qu'émet tout existant-objet. E-branlé, il répond à l'appel et s'abandonne, allant du sujet à l'objet, du moi au Toi, sur les ondes de l'Autre. Il meurt à soi pour renaître dans l'Autre. Il n'est pas assimilé: il s'assimile, il s'identifie à l'Autre, ce qui est la meilleure façon de le connaître. C'est dire que le Nègre, traditionnellement, n'est pas dénué de raison, comme on a voulu me le faire dire. Mais sa raison n'est pas discursive; elle est synthétique. La raison blanche est analytique par utilisation, la raison nègre, intuitive par participation.39

The kinship with Lévy-Bruhl is immediately obvious, as is the presence of the Sartrian (and, more distantly, Hegelian) dialectic of Self and Other, a common theme in that period of French intellectual history. The underlying connotations are, however, essentially the same as those of the "colonialist" code above.

The first part of the passage reiterates the connections between /nègre/, /nature/, and /terre/, a complex so common that it is a cliché. Its ramifications are many: "good dancers", "natural rhythm", "soul" are some of its more colloquial forms. Senghor elaborates upon these commonplaces. Being natural and sensual is not only a matter of communion with nature, but also of transcending the subject/object dichotomy. Soul is a matter of participation. The subject/object connundrum, a central topic of Western philosophy, is described as the product of an overly "analytical" philosophical tradition and culture, that which removes the European from "authentic" feeling and nature. Rousseau said as much.

The key difference between Senghor's text and the "colonialist code" is that /nègre/ and its series of connotations are positive in the former. A model of its connotations would look like this:

(+)	vs.	(-)
nègre	vs.	blanc
nature	vs.	non-nature
rythme	vs.	a-rythme
raison synthétique	vs.	raison analytique

It goes without saying that such a model expresses only the crudest outlines of Senghorian philosophy, for a text, any text, is infinitely more complex than its model. Like any text, the present one exploits numerous rhetorical devices, a total accounting of which is *practically* impossible. "Heideggerian metaplasms" (like "E-branlé") and the metataxic parallelisms ("de la terre et avec la terre","il n'est pas assimilé, il s'assimile"), abound in the above passages.[40] But a brief look at other passages from the same article will reveal another rhetorical device.

Conjunction of terms creates a network of many other connotations *in potentia*. "Le Nègre est l'homme de la terre" already implies that the European is innately gifted for science, rather than art, and possesses an analytic rather than synthetic reason. Other connotations are a matter of "plugging" the axes they belong to into the system. If the dichotomy *être/faire* is introduced, the former is attributed to the African, the latter to the European; *fertilité/sterilité*, *abstrait/concret* would share the same fate.

As the text continues, many of these connotations are called into presence:

> 1 Car ce qui saisit le Nègre, c'est non l'apparence de l'objet que sa réalité profonde, sa *surréalité*; moins son *signe* que son *sens*.(52)
>
> 2 Toute manifestation d'art africain est collective, faite pout tous avec participation pour tous. (56) C'est dire qu'en Afrique noire,"l'art pour l'art" n'existe pas; tout art est social. (59)
>
> 3 ... les langues négro-africaines mettent l'accent sur l'*aspect*, la façon concrète dont se déroule l'action verbale. C'est dire que celles-ci sont essentiellement des langues concrètes.(59)
>
> 4 J'ai parlé d'image surréaliste. Mais, on le devine, le surréalisme négro-africain diffère du surréalisme européen. Celui-ci est empirique; celui-là, mystique, métaphysique. (59)
>
> 5 Qu'est-ce que le rythme? C'est l'architecture de l'être, le dynamisme interne qui lui donne forme, le système d'ondes qu'il émet à l'adresse des Autres, l'expression pure de la force vitale. (60)

The first example distributes /nègre/ and /blanc/ along a rather erudite axis, that of /sens signe/, but one latent in the paragraph cited earlier, and of course in any theory of participation.

The second one defines African art in terms of its purportedly collective nature. "Individualistic" is one of the accredited qualifiers for European bourgeois society, and it is in contrast with that individualism that African art is labelled collective.

The dichotomy between abstract and concrete, already implied by the distinctions between science and poetry, machine and soil, culture and nature, serves as the basis of the contrast and parallelisms within the third example.

The literary definition in the fourth example which two varieties of surrealism, is interesting, for it appears to reverse the values expressed immediately above. Once granted the contrast Africa-Europe, and given that Breton claimed that his surrealism was empirical, as he is quoted saying a few sentences later in Senghor's text, the qualities applied to Africa must be those in contrast with "empirical": mystical, metaphysical. *What is important is the play of oppositions, not any predetermined order of things*.

The fifth example is a conjunction of several elements. Rhythm becomes an essence of Being, Vital Force itself, and is reponsible for "open-ness" between subject and object.

"Empty rhetoric" is perhaps too strong an expression for what occurs in these passages. There is moreover a danger that, because of our historical perspective, we perceive as redundant that which, in its time, was informative. What we already know is redundant precisely because it was at some point informative. Senghor is now part of what we know about racism. Négritude was not only a product of that code, but a commentary upon it.

The basic pattern of connotative chains is an analogy of antonyms, strung out in chains as follows:

$$\frac{\text{black}}{\text{white}} = \frac{\text{nature}}{\text{culture}} = \frac{\text{soil}}{\text{machine}} = \frac{\text{emotion}}{\text{reason}} = \frac{\text{synthetic}}{\text{analytic}}$$

The slots of the above chain are quite arbitrarily filled in, insofar as there is no reason we could not imagine the following analogy (though in a different context):

$$\frac{\text{black}}{\text{white}} = \frac{\text{culture}}{\text{nature}}$$

The same structural or logical relations would be present.

The analogy of antonyms is already ideological, but its particular incarnations, *investissements*, its "content", are doubly so. The latter is a surface phenomenon, and is contingent upon the particular ideology of a time and place; the former is deep, and is related to the ways connotation works in a binary system. Deep ideology is a function of analogy, which restricts the number of "directions" connotations could move in; surface ideology is a function of the particular choice of antonyms, the vocabulary.

Senghor's "inversion of values" is a matter of exploiting the ideological possibilities of such a system. Black becomes positive rather than negative, and so do its various connotations: emotion, nature, poetry. But saying that "Emotion is Negro", is gratuitous unless there is an *écart*, and a norm against which the statement is read. There is no way of verifying whether or not Emotion is actually Negro, whether or not "Western reason" is analytic or synthetic. The norm is necessarily a code, and a code at the core of the dominant ideology.

The frequent claim that Senghor is "neo-colonialist"[41] therefore has semiotic, as well as other, justification. Senghor poses no threat to the ideology still in place and in power; he reaffirms it, and refuses to question its shape, its confines, its perspective, only its positive or negative "charge".

In fact, Senghor reproduces the outlines of the code so well that, almost a parody, he is one of its best guides.

"Ce n'est pas un hasard si le premier ouvrage sur la philosophie africaine a été écrit par un étranger". J.P. Hountondji was referring to the Belgian priest R.P. Tempels, and went on to suggest that African philosophy was inaugurated by a European because the very field of study was a European rather than an African need.

> Le démonstration de Tempels répondait en effet à des préoccupations européennes, elle prenait place dans un débat idéologique dont l'Afrique n'était pas le lieu, mais seulement l'objet ou le prétexte. L'auteur voulait réfuter Lévy-Bruhl et montrer, contre lui et son école, la merveilleuse cohérence de la "mentalité primitive". 42

As commendable as such a project may have seemed, it too merely inversed the terms of Lévy-Bruhl's thought. Tempels himself wanted to make missionary work in the Congo more effective by drawing connections between European theology and African "anti-materialism". His long-term aim was proselytism and conversion, and one of its side-effects was that Africa would infuse life-blood into an increasingly sterile and materialistic Europe, as in the poem by Senghor:

> New-York! je dis New-York, laisse affluer le sang
> noir dans ton sang
> Qu'il dérouille tes articulations d'acier, comme
> une huile de vie
> Qu'il donne à tes ponts la courbe des croupes et la
> souplesse des lianes [43]

Senghor was to extend these ideas much farther; in his Universal Culture Africa was the living leavening in the barren dough of Europe; Harlem was the harbinger of a future and more vital Weltkultur[44]. Tempels, more simply, portrayed the child-like primitives of European stereotype as potential and ideal children of God.

The "Bantu School" never came to terms with a crucial epistemological dilemma--which does not prevent good poetry, but does good philosophy. Its blindness resulted from a refusal to admit the European preoccupation its philosophical method and audience betrayed.

> Paradoxalement, toute la philosophie africaine se réduit à peu près, depuis plus de vingt ans, à un discours sur la "philosophie africaine"; c'est-à-dire en fait, à un discours sur un objet hypothétique, que l'on a voulu reconstituer, ou plutôt constituer à tout prix, et qui est, en un mot, la vision du monde des africains. C'est cette vision du monde, réelle ou supposée, que l'on a baptisée "philosophie", en la présentant au monde comme un système complet et achevé que l'on pouvait valablement opposer à la philosophie européenne, et en supposant de ce fait, entre l'une et l'autre, une communauté de genre. [45]

The design of this "African philosophy" was to mark its difference from the West, to reduce the West to Other. In this form, African philosophy depends upon a set of variations already inherent in Western philosophical discourse.

With the exception of regions subject to Arabic influence (the Bled es Sudan, the "land of the blacks"),[46] African cultures did not develop a "commentator's culture". They did not spin webs of commentary upon previous discourse, in part because writing did not exist (with the exception again of Arabized regions).[47] This distinction between the speculative metaphysics of the West, the Arabs, the Hindus and the Chinese, and the mythic cosmogonies of tribal Africa is fundamental. The latter lack nothing in complexity to the former, as Griaule showed in his Dieu d'eau.[48] But although they can be "retrieved" by anthropology, and lived by those still in direct contact with them, these cosmogonies cannot be integrated into a radically alien philosophical tradition without changing nature. They should even less be taken as a counterpart of Western philosophy.

> Il serait inexact de dire ou de soutenir que les Dogons de la Falaise de Bandiagara disposent d'un système philosophique dans la mesure où l'on entend, par cette expression, un système de pensée speculative consciente d'elle-même; mais il n'est pas exagéré d'admettre qu'ils ont une cosmogonie cohérente expliquant d'un façon satisfaisante pour leur conscience tous les aspects de l'Univers. 49

Taking these cosmogonies for speculative systems does, however, open the way for further metaphysical discourse, in the worst sense of the words, "predicated upon thin air". Since nothing real is at stake in African philosophy, since its subject matter is "un objet hypothétique", it is free to assume practically any form; in practice the principle of identity and difference prevails, and African philosophy takes shape as a mirror image of Western philosophy which can be decoded only in terms of this latter philosophy.

Here again the implicit relationship between Western "primitivism" and "African" ideologies of a certain idealist sort appears. The intellectual fashion of primitivism has, since the Greeks, hinged on inversions of reigning values, and in its twentieth century forms, turned to African art for inspiration. Rimbaud's self-portrait as *nègre* in *Une saison en enfer*, and his rejection of traditional Western values implies much that has been said about the difference between African and European cultures, if not in the least all that might be said about Africa. The influence of Rimbaud upon Césaire, a commonplace of Césaire criticism,[50] is, if only one approach, not without proof.

Freed from the need to measure itself against the concrete, the Bantu School, especially in its less substantial forms, dealt more in stereotype than in perception:

> L'Aryen étant le fils d'un dieu, arrange son universe et, ainsi, fait face à la réalité avec une force et une fierté empruntées, toutes empruntées à ses dieux (à l'idée qu'il en a). L'Hindou ne fait qu'un avec le centre de la réalité et peut donc lui faire face avec calme. Le Mongol sait que tout est équilibre et ordre, et ne connaît pas la peur. L'Africain se croit le frère des animaux, ayant des liens consanguins avec certaines espèces. Le monde est bon ou mauvais et il le surveille attentivement, les yeux bien ouverts. En aucun cas, il ne laisse aller ce monde paré de son esprit, non plus constamment devant lui, et il l'envisage avec une certaine ambivalence affective. L'habitude des Africains de se considérer comme un tout intégral et la réalité également comme un tout leur fait goûter la vie comme une expérience toujours neuve.[51]

The remnants of certain racial clichés (the smiling Oriental, the aggressive Aryan) are not difficult to recognize in the above statements in an article on "Philosophie africaine". The author's conception of the African world-view borrows heavily from Tempels: the Bantu perceives the unity of Being, lives its swaying rhythms; the Bantu is "symbolist, universalist, and transcendentalist".[52] It follows that "the African Mind" finds expression in symbols (rather than in logic, the "analytic" reason of Senghor); that African emotion is expressed through rhythm, through repetition; and that African art is necessarily marked with both symbol and rhythm.[53] Symbolic (as opposed to logical) thought is "metaphysical"; not cold abstraction, as in the West, but the momentary application of a concept at one particular level and at one particular moment ("un concept [qui] s'applique uniquement à un niveau déterminé de la réalité à un moment donné"). Metaphysics African-style does not therefore reduce thought to abstruse theory, but serves as a springboard into manifold realms of reality. There is, according to Mabona, no separation of theory and practice, no specialization. And his propositions come to a familiar end: the resolution of the dichotomy of subject and object which is the central theme of Western philosophy. His argument is circular: if there is no dichotomy of theory and practice, then there is obviously a unity of Being. If there is unity of Being, then there is no dichotomy between mind and matter; metaphysics is physics. Or, to continue the poem of Senghor cited above:

> Voici revenir les temps très anciens, l'unité retrouvée
> la réconciliation du Lion du Taureau et de l'Arbre
> L'idée liée à l'acte l'oreille au coeur le signe au sens.

The concepts of African philosophy touch those of European philosophy, touch and distinguish themselves as converse. At moments, African philosophy projects itself as the culmination, the fruition of the Western philosophical quest, for it proposes a unity and harmony the West has never philosophically achieved.

Kagame's La Philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise de l'Etre[54] is the most brilliant product of the Bantu School, and is of special pertinence to literary critics: he is one of the five authors who served as grist to Janheinz Jahn's mill in Muntu,[55] which is founded on the presumption that disparate discourses can be synthesized into a single one by taking their object of thought as one.[56] Jahn organized his book around the four metaphysical categories Kagame had posited: Muntu, man; Kintu, thing; Hantu, time and space; and Kuntu, mode. The extrapolation of these categories, themselves extrapolated from the grammatical categories of Kinyarwandese, is evidently a gross simplification,[57] but Muntu was an ideological tour de force, and there are Afro-American scholars who still bolster their theories of the specificity of Black American culture with his terminology.[58] African and "neo-African" cultures may well use language in a special way, but the mere transfer of terms from Dogon mythology through two different filters, Griaule's and then Jahn's, does not constitute serious proof of it.

Kagame, himself a priest, also had personal reasons to contrast the Western philosophy he had assimilated with *an* African philosophy. The four categories of Rwandese thought are compared with the ten Aristotelean categories not only as a heuristic device, but as another means of marking the difference between Africa and the West. The transposition of one's own model (in this case, grammatical categories) into ontological categories, into essentialist "structures of thought", is a procedure widespread in the Bantu School, whose aim is not to create an independent discourse, but to delineate (after presupposing its existence) an unconscious system of thought underlying the life of a collectivity in constant evolution, already Other. As Houndondji points out, Kagame's philosophy is not that of the Rwandans, but of Kagame himself; the moment he moves from philology and linguistics into formulation of a collective philosophy based on those linguistic data, he becomes locked into circularity with the ideology he seeks to replace.[59]

There is an analogous marking of difference in *The Mind of Africa*.[60] The construction of what Abraham calls a "paradigm" of African society, based on the culture of his own tribe, the Akan of Ghana, plays on analogy as well. His description of the African view of man depends on the contrast with "scientific" Europe:

$$\frac{\text{essentialist}}{\text{Africa}} = \frac{\text{scientific}}{\text{Europe}}$$

Various synonyms for "scientific" could easily be substituted into this paradigm: "materialist", "empirical", perhaps even "existentialist".

Senghor, when faced with the need to label two kinds of surrealism, the European and the African, chose to call the former empiricist; "materialist" is a common tag commonly attached to Western culture by those who forget that the run-away transformation of nature wrought by technology is a product of culture, a mental vision.

For Abraham too Africa is primarily spiritual, metaphysical. Its metaphysical values are transcendental, not contingent. And its ethics, in contrast with the individualism of the West, are communalistic, as the discussion of Akan literary culture claims.[61]

It is no accident, then, that the first work of African philosophy was written by a European. It is furthermore no accident that Africans who have pursued the topic often do so from a Christian point of view, with a need to reconcile Christian theology and a presumed African theology, a *théodicité*. Kagame and Tempels were both priests; Senghor's religious preferences are a matter of public record. But the audience of those susceptible to the above arguments is not limited to Christians. *Muntu* has an influence far beyond the confines of Africa proper. The Islamic historian Cheikh Anta Diop is also involved in the dialectic of identity and difference.

The central thesis of Cheikh Anta Diop is the Egyptian base of African civilization. A simple analogy underlies this "Egypt thesis":

$$\frac{\text{Egypt}}{\text{Africa}} = \frac{\text{Greece}}{\text{Europe}}$$

The cultural lineage of European civilization is almost always traced back to Greek roots. The Egypt thesis is an attempt to acquire equally illustrious predecessors for African culture, of the same style and importance. The majesty, stability, and mystery of ancient Egyptian civilization is taken as the source of an entire panel of universal history, and tribal cultures are viewed as the logical development of the culture which gave birth to the pyramids. Diop's many studies of the role Egypt is said to have played in African cultural history are well-documented, but not above criticism.[62] Comparative studies of ancient Egyptian and modern Wolof, and of political and social institutions throughout Africa and in ancient Egypt bolster his thesis. But his evidence curiously aligns itself into polar patterns. Let us observe the play of oppositions, and the careful periodic sentences (which imply a neater reality than is in fact present), within a lengthy text:

> Le berceau méridional confiné au continent africain en particulier est caractérisé par la famille matriarcale, la création de l'Etat territorial, par opposition à l'Etat-Cité aryen, l'émancipation de la femme dans la vie domestique, la xénophilie, le cosmopolitisme, une sorte de collectivisme social ayant comme corollaire la quiétude allant jusqu'à l'insouciance du lendemain, une solidarité matérielle de droit pour chaque individu, qui fait que la misère matérielle ou morale est inconnue jusqu'à nos jours; il y a des gens pauvres, mais personne ne se sent seul, personne n'est angoissé. Dans le domaine moral, un idéal de paix, de justice, de bonté, un optimisme qui élimine toute notion de culpabilité ou de péché originel dans les créations religieuses et métaphysiques. Le genre littéraire de prédilection est le roman, le conte, la fable et la comédie.
>
> Le berceau nordique confiné à la Grèce et à Rome est caractérisé par la famille patriarcale, par l'Etat-Cité;

> on voit aisément que c'est au contact du monde méridional que les nordiques ont élargi leur conception étatique pour s'élever au niveau de l'idée d'un état territorial et d'un empire. Le caractère particulier de ces Etats-Cités en dehors desquels on était un hors la loi développa le patriotisme à l'intérieur, ainsi que la xénophobie. L'individualisme, la solitude morale et matérielle, le dégoût pour l'existence, toute la matière de la littérature moderne qui même sous ses aspects philosophiques n'est autre que l'expression de la tragédie d'un vie dont le style remonte aux ancêtres, sont l'apanage de ce berceau.
>
> Un idéal de guerre, de violence, de crime, de conquête, hérité de la vie nomade avec comme corollaire un sentiment de culpabilité ou de péché originel qui fait bâtir des systèmes religieux ou métaphysiques pessimistes, est l'apanage de ce berceau.[63]

This utopian vision is not without nuances, such as the allusion to the influence the meridional world had upon the nordic one ("c'est au contact du monde méridional que les nordiques ont élargi..."). The obvious objection that the liberation of women is certainly not the most advanced in the meridional world, as things now stand, is answered with a *petitio principii*:

> "Le progrès technique et la vie moderne, l'émancipation progressive de la femme moderne sous l'influence même de cet individualisme, tant de facteurs rendent difficile l'effort nécessaire pour se rappeler l'antique condition de serve de la femme aryenne".[64]

But the argumentation retains the form of a series of oppositions, much like those of Mme de Staël in *De la littérature* and *De l'allemagne:*

meridional	/	nordic
matriarchy	/	patriarchy
territorial state	/	city state
xenophilia	/	xenophobia
collectivism	/	individualism
peace	/	war
justice	/	violence
optimism	/	pessimism
non-guilt	/	guilt
comedy	/	tragedy

We cannot here discuss the accuracy of his system, bring forth the existing evidence that African civilizations, as well, experienced war, call into question the contrast between territorial states and city states, between matriarchy and patriarchy. But brief reflection shows that, although the duty of the historian is to generalize and detect the larger patterns, the fatal error of many is to lean too far in that direction, and impose pattern where there is none. In a word, symmetry is not the design of history, but of the historian.

There are complex figures of thought behind Diop's version of African history, figures which depend upon all the connotative power of the French language and of the humanist culture for which it is the frequent vehicule. Where else does the certainty that Western culture is based upon "la solitude morale", upon a "malaise intellectuel" come from?[65]

The "literary" applications of this utopia[66] are delineated by Diop himself. Guilt being foreign to the meridional mentality, the African myth of the blacksmith (of which there are contemporary manifestations in Laye's L'Enfant noir) cannot take on Promethean proportions.

> L'analyse du mythe du Prométhée a conduit Nietzche à faire de la criminalité efficace un élément constitutif de la conscience aryenne. En approfondissant le mythe du forgeron en Afrique noire et dans l'ancienne Egypte, on aboutit facilement à un héros équivalent au Prométhée, voleur du feu et bienfaiteur de l'humanitié de par les nouvelles techniques qu'il apporte. Ici aussi la notion de crime n'est pas absente, mais elle est atténuée...; il n'en résultera nullement un sentiment de culpabilité permanent pesant sur l'ensemble de l'humanité et obligeant celle-ci à se créer un univers pessimiste. [67]

The genre of tragedy, conceived as content rather than form, derives from this obsession with collective guilt,[68] and here Diop is in agreement with Nietzsche, for whom tragedy is the main mode of the West, a mode with roots in... Greece. And African civilization, apposes Diop, feeds off a deep vein of optimism, and finds in the novel, the tale, the fable, and the comedy its preferred forms of expression.

This view runs counter to that of Senghor and Césaire, for whom poetry is central to the African spirit. But the essential in the foregoing analyses is not what is said; we do not presume to arbitrate in these matters. What is important is rather how these assertions are made, where they come from, and, further behind, who makes them, for the benefit of whom.

A similar series of questions ought to be asked about a related tendency in African literary ideology, the search for roots in an authentic Tradition.

FOOTNOTES: IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE

[1] Antonio Gramsci, Gli Intellettuali. Torino, 1949, p. 3.

[2] Yves Bénot, Idéologies des indépendances africaines. Paris, 1972.

[3] Certain non-Western countries like the USSR find other ways to divert attention from elite domination.

[4] This is not only the underlying theme of Marxist analysts (for which Michel Vadée, L'Idéologie. Paris, 1973), but of Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia. New York, 1936.

[5] Umberto Eco, Le Forme del contenuto. Milano, 1971, p. 151.

[6] Karl Marx, Die deutsche Ideologie. Paris, 1972, p. 98. Gramsci also tied "idealist" philosophies to the identity of the philosophizing elite, Gli Intellettuali, p. 5.

[7] Those interested in pursuing these fundamental semantic processes can turn to Greimas, Sémantique structurale. Paris, 1966, pp. 18-29.

[8] J.P. Sartre, "Orphée noir", in L.S. Senghor, Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française. Paris, 1948, p. xxi.

9 Paris, 1954.

10 The standard surveys are: A. Brench, The Novelist's Inheritance in French Africa. Oxford, 1967; Hubert de Leusse, Afrique et Occident: Heurs et malheurs d'une rencontre. Paris, 1971; Judith Gleason, This Africa: Novels by West Africans in English and French. Evanston, 1965: Charles Larson, The Emergence of African Fiction. Indiana, 1971.

11 Cheikh Hamidou Kane, L'Aventure ambigue. Paris, 1961.

12 For an account of the "scandal", and references, see James Olney, Tell Me Africa. Princeton, 1974, p. 208.

13 Cheikh Anta Diop, "Apports et perspectives culturelles de l'Afrique", Présence Africaine, 8-9-10 (juin-novembre 1956), pp. 339-46, is a brief version of his views published later in Unité culturelle de l'Afrique noire. Paris, 1960, and Nations nègres et culture. Paris, 1965.

14 Abiola Irele, "Négritude, literature and ideplogy", Journal of Modern African Studies, III, 4 (1965), p. 514.

15 Léon Damas, "En file indienne", from Pigments, in L. Kesteloot (ed.), Anthologie négro-africaine. Paris, 1967, pp. 91-2.

16 Among the founders of Négritude, neither Césaire nor Damas were African. But the domaine antillais is considered with reason part of "Negro-African" literature. Not only are there numerous cultural, political, and geographical resemblances between the two regions, but at one time their elites were inseparable.

17 Frantz Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre. Paris, 1968, p. 146.

18 Sartre, "Orphée noir", in Senghor, Anthologie..., pp. xi-xii.

19 S. Okechukwo Mezu, Léopold Sédar Senghor et la défense et illustration de la civilisation noire. Paris, 1968. pp. 194-5.

20 I.L. Markovitz makes the point that there is an ideological shift from the early to the later Senghor as his political strategy evolved. Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Politics of Négritude. New York, 1969.

21 Tchicaya U Tam'si, Epitomé. Tunis, 1962. Discussed above in Chapter Three.

22 Sylvia Washington Bâ, The Concept of Négritude in the Poetry of Léopold Sédar Senghor. Princeton, 1974, p. vii.

23 "Culture et colonisation", Présence Africaine, 8-9-10 (juin-novembre 1956), p. 190.

[24] "Cultural Personality in the Ideologies of the Third World", *Diogenes*, 78 (1972), p. 130.

[25] L.-V. Thomas, "Panorama de la négritude", *Actes du Colloque sur la littérature d'expression française*. Dakar, 21-29 mars. Dakar, 1965, p. 49.

[26] *Liberté 2, nation et voie africaine du socialisme*. Paris, 1971.

[27] J.P. Sartre, "La Pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba", *Situations V*. Paris, 1964, pp. 237, 241.

[28] Léon Fanoudh-Sieffer, *Le Mythe du nègre et de l'Afrique noire dans la littérature française*. Paris, 1968. Léon-François Hoffman, *Le Nègre romantique: personage littéraire et obsession collective*. Paris, 1973. Roland Lebel, *Histoire de la littérature coloniale en France*. Paris, 1931. Martine Astier-Loufti, *Littérature et* colonialisme: *L'Image de l'impérialisme dans la littérature française, 1870-1940*. Paris, 1972. Martin Tucker, *Africa in Modern Literature*. New York, 1967.

[29] Jacques Louis Hymans, *Léopold Sédar Senghor, an Intellectual Biography*. Edinburgh, 1971.

[30] Abiola Irele, "Négritude, or Black Cultural Nationalism", Journal of Modern African Studies, III, 3 (1965), p. 343.

[31] Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, La Mentalité primitive. Oxford, 1941, p. 21.

[32] Or, at least, insufficient. His fully developed philosophy prescribed a fusion of all world's cultures, and hence a collaboration with official French culture and government. "L'Esprit de la civilisation...", Présence Africaine, 8-9-10 (juin-novembre 1956), pp. 50-65.

[33] George Boas, Essays on Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages. Baltimore, 1948. Robert Goldwater, Primitivism in Modern Art. New York, 1967. A.O. Lovejoy and George Boas, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity. New York, 1965.

[34] See Umberto Eco's use of these connotative chains, Le Forme del contenuto. Milano, 1971, p. 49 f. The reader will recall another such chain from Chapter Two.

[35] Eco, ibid., p. 50.

[36] A.J. Greimas, Du Sens. Paris, 1970, pp. 117-34.

[37] John Lyons, Introduction to *Theoretical Linguistics*. Cambridge, 1968, pp. 460-70, discusses the current consensus on the diverse sorts of "antonyms."

[38] Eco's chapter on "Semiotica delle ideologie" in *Le Forme del contenuto*. Milano, 1971, pp. 147-55, will clarify these assertions somewhat.

[39] Senghor, "L'Esprit de la civilisation, ou les lois de la culture négro-africaine",*Présence Africaine,* 8-9-10 (juin-novembre 1956), p. 52. Page numbers in parenthesis refer henceforth to this text.

[40] See Jacques Dubois et al., *Rhétorique générale*. Paris, 1970.

[41] Marcien Towa, *Léopold Sédar Senghor*: *négritude ou servitude*? Yaoundé, 1971; S. Adotevi, *Négritude et négrologues*. Paris, 1972; Bernth Lindfors, "Anti-négritude in Algiers", *Africa Today*, XVII, 1 (January 1970), 5-7.

[42] J.P. Houndtondji, "Le Problème actuel de la philosophie africaine", R. Klibansky (ed.), *Contemporary Philosophy IV*. Firenze, 1971, p. 614.

[43] Senghor, "New York" in Clive Wake (ed.), *An Anthology of African and Malagasy Poetry*. Oxford, 1965, p. 98.

[44] This Weltkultur is Senghor's Universal Culture, not at all alien in spirit to Goethe's.

[45] Houndtonji, op. cit., p. 614.

[46] Baba Ibrahima Kake, "Un grand érudit de la Nigritie au XVIe siècle",Présence Africaine, 60 (4e 1966), pp. 34-45. The biography would be a good way to approach the Islamic presence in Africa.

[47] And of such exceptions as the Vai of Liberia, who invented an alphabet during the 19th century.

[48] Paris, 1948.

[49] Cheikh Anta Diop, L'Unité culturelle de l'Afrique. Paris, 1959, p. 168.

[50] See for example, L. Kesteloot and B. Kotchy, Aimé Césaire, l'homme et l'oeuvre. Paris, 1973.

[51] Père Antoine Mabona, "Philosophie africaine", Présence Africaine, 30 (février 1960), pp. 55-6.

[52] Mabona, ibid., p. 54.

[53] These are the views of Janheinz Jahn in his Muntu. New York, 1961, especially in Chapter 6, pp. 156-84.

[54] Bruxelles, 1956.

[55] Muntu, p. 99.

[56] There obviously is some form of "Neo-African" culture, but Jahn's idealist fusion of diverse books is no way to approach its study. One way would be Roger Bastide, Les Amériques noires. Paris, 1967.

[57] It would be like taking the categories of Indo-European grammar as indication of the Western "world-view".

[58] Arthur L. Smith, Rhetoric of Black Revolution. Boston, 1969.

[59] Houndtondji, op. cit., p. 619.

[60] W.E. Abraham, The Mind of Africa. Chicago, 1962.

[61] Abraham, ibid., p. 97.

[62] Abraham, ibid., p. 40.

[63] Diop, L'Unité culturelle.... p. 185.

[64] Diop, ibid., p. 186.

[65] Diop, ibid., p. 186.

[66] We use the term "utopia" in the same way as L.V. Thomas, "Temps, mythe et histoire en Afrique de l'Ouest", Présence Africaine, 40 (4e 1961), pp. 12-58.

[67] Diop, op. cit., pp. 167-8.

[68] Diop, ibid., p. 169.

CHAPTER FIVE: TRADITION AND MODERNITY

The concept of Tradition is the cornerstone of much contemporary African thought. Critics revel in images of an Africa untainted by the contradictions of the present. The past is the safest place for this vision of Edenic harmony, although there is also a Third World futurism which promotes utopic visions of what is supposed to come.[1] Mannheim discussed ideological obsessions with the past or future at length.[2] In either case, attention is diverted from the present to a fantasy: from the prestidigitator's hands to the product of his manipulations.[3] The fully replete vision of Traditional Africa, whose outlines are dictated by the play of oppositions discussed in the previous chapter, but whose details are easily filled in, has an intoxicating effect upon African or Africanizing ideologues.

On the other hand, the dichotomy Tradition/Modernity reflects an actual rupture within African society, though it is in fact a misreading of that rupture. That which underlies its frequent use is the political and social gulf separating the philosophizing elite from the masses.

Folklore, itself defined as "all lore (knowledge, wisdom, action) transmitted by tradition" is related to what we might call "traditionalism".[4] And primitivism, also an affectation of an elite confronted with an Other to which it attributes positive antonyms of its own flaws, is akin to both.

The conflict between those with political power and those without is neglected in favour of a study of a purely hypostatic entity, be it the Tradition, the Folk, or the Noble Savage. The parallel between African traditionalism and these two other phenomena with roots in Western elitism is not gratuitous. Primitivism also existed in pre-capitalist societies like Rome, but it is always predicated upon elitism, and upon the cultural and thus ideological distinctions between the Elaborate and the Simple, the Urban and the Rural.[5] Capitalism is also capitolism, a hierarchical concentration of authority in metropolitan centres. Primitivism, the inversion of reigning cultural values, is one reaction which develops against centralism, but one which avoids rather than confronts concrete social conditions. Folklore, one need not go far to show, was founded out of a dual need, the justification for a unified national(ist) history,[6] and the preservation of the lore of peripheral masses who had, until the rapid development of nineteenth century capitalism, been able to hold themselves apart from Western "civilization".

Indeed, the themes of folklore, especially as argued out in the methodological deliberations which have always marked this discipline, are extremely pertinent to African Traditionalism. Naumann's division of the Volk into an Oberschicht and an Unterschicht, concepts rejected both by Nazi folklorists because they threatened the Hitlerian doctrine of racial unity, and by the Soviets, for whom creativity is a property of the masses, not of an intelligentzia,[7] no longer has currency. But the dichotomy between the elite and the mass is not only within the subject matter of folklore; it is the very grounds for it. Certainly, folklore and the related tendency of traditionalism exist precisely because there is an Oberschicht, whose lore is to study, and an Unterschicht, whose lore is studied. Recently folklorists, like some ethnographers,[8] have become aware of these presuppositions.

The Africanist Dan Ben-Amos' response to this dilemma is to convert folklore into the study of small-group social and artistic intercourse wherever it may occur, in "primitive" or in "advanced" societies.[9] Such an approach is one possible way of transcending the tradition-bound conventions of folklore research, and establishing possible grounds for an "objective" science of lore, something more than study of the marginal and dominated outskirts of metropolitan culture. Although he does not confront this problem, that of all sociology within class societies, Ben-Amos does recognize that the "traditional character of folklore is an analytical construct. It is a scholarly and not a cultural fact".[10] And thereby he relieves folklore studies from the weight of an obsession, reverence for an idealized past.

Traditional mores are habitually defined by their oral nature. The group centered around Denise Paulme and Geneviève Calame-Griaule which publishes regularly in Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, speaks not of "folklore", but of littérature orale, although its methods are fundamentally those of traditional folklore.[11] And the very criterion of orality is central to the definition of folklore itself, historically the study of illiterates by literates.[12] Literacy and its lack are its hidden dynamic. The concept of an African Tradition is founded upon a similar schism: those who are "modern" study those whom they call "traditional". An instrument of the nation-constructing class in Africa, traditionalism fixes attention upon a hypostatized duality, and thereby camouflages the grounds of its own continued existence, the dichotomy between elite and mass in Africa.

Not surprisingly, the manifold connotations and even denotations of "tradition" remain confused. The word is made to refer to the entirety of African civilization before the arrival of the Europeans (but not of the Arabs), to the mythic or cultural content of that civilization, to a pastoral image of untroubled daily life in such times, and to tribal literary practices. The concept is both diachronic, insofar as it alludes to pre-colonial times, and synchronic, insofar as it is attributed to contemporary Africans only slightly affected by "modern" life.

The characters and readers of Onitsha literature place positive value on modernity. The fully-literate literary critic tends, inversely, to regret his Westernization, and to look nostalgically back to lost innocence. The yearning is sometimes a literary pose borrowed from Western tradition, as in Okigbo's Virgilian eclogues.[13] But it also follows from the frustration and disorientation experienced by the bourgeoisie. "Tradition" becomes, finally, a code word for all which is alien to the contemporary elite, an elite which then "borrows" traditional elements into its literary works in order to acquire originality vis-à-vis the outside non-African world. Tradition is ascribed to either a distant or a recent past, but it is understood that the best exemplification of traditional values is still walking around in the here-and-now.

Yet the culture of the illiterate masses of Africa is not a static and crystallized relic of a mysterious past, but an active means of resistance against their increasing exploitation. The image seen in so many African novels of the man trapped between two worlds, the individualist whose ties to an archaic kinship system hinders his upward mobility, is actually a misrepresentation of a form of group solidarity which contains the seeds of an alternative social organization.

> Des phénomènes sociaux variés et importants, comme l'organisation de la solidarité redistributive, ne peuvent être analysés en termes de "survivances" de la société traditionnelle (solidarités ethniques et villageoises, etc.),

> mais doivent au contraire être réinterprétés comme les moyens de résistance et de survie dans les conditions du capitalisme périphérique, même s'ils se moulent dans les formes "traditionnelles".[14]

What appear to be traditional forms do contrast readily with modern ones and become terms of a major ideological polarity. But such a scheme serves a purpose: it cloaks the class conflict between those who manage State and cultural apparatus in contemporary Africa and those who remain still unorganized. The racial or ethnic solidarity of Africans, which at one point in time was a necessary position, has become the ideological instrument of an elite.

African poets have written eloquently, on the other hand, of their personal relationship to "tradition", especially as represented in memories of family or childhood. Autobiography is a major genre within African literature, such that the novel is itself often autobiographical in form and in content.[15] The author-hero commonly seeks out ties with a traditional past, with pre-modern culture. Camara Laye's L'Enfant noir is a classic, but a comparable warmth of feeling can be found in numerous poems of Senghor, of John Pepper Clark, in most writings of lesser poets, and in such works as Elechi Amadi's The Concubine, whose recreation of a dignified and almost Grecian pre-colonial past is perhaps an early example of a vein of African writing yet to be developed and marketed, the escapist historical romance. Chinua Achebe's "odd-numbered" novels (that is, Things Fall Apart, and The Arrow of God) are examples of nostalgia too well-known to need to be elaborated.

All of these descriptions of traditional Africa contribute to the image of African life, past and present, in which tradition is just a generation away, and is culturally, not politically or economically, different in nature. The cultural concept of tradition is prerequisite to descriptions of reality as, essentially, a scene for cultural conflict or for a synthesis of new African man from two disparate but reconciliable historical types, the Western and the African.

All of this is not to say that there are no real differences between tribal and peripherally capitalist Africa, nor even that cultural differences do not go a long way towards describing much that separates past from present, or, more pertinently, the present elite from the past masses. Tribal culture was essentially different from the modern culture of Africa: literate and oral social systems are dissimilar, and distribute power in their own ways. The latter are more "egalitarian" insofar as language in general is a common social property, and the authority to interpret texts is not. The writers who transcribe folktales are right to extol the creativity of the oral story-tellers.[16] But the effort to seize the feeling, form and flow of an oral tradition is responsible for much contemporary myth-making about the verbal magic of "neo-African" writers:

> According to African philosophy, man has, by the force of his word, dominion of "things"; he can change them, make them work for him, and command them. But to command things with words is to practice "magic". And to practice word magic is to write poetry--that holds not only for Africa. Thus African philosophy ascribes to the word a significance which it has also in many other cultures, but there in poetry only. That is why African poetry made such a world-wide impression the moment it was heard beyond the bounds of Africa.17

The key of Jahn's argument is that "neo-African" writers like Aimé Césaire and Senghor are contemporary examples of this traditional verbal magic, whatever language they may write in and whatever their social situations.

Likewise, the recognition that tribal culture was somehow more egalitarian than the present culture is also the premise of numerous proposals for an indigenous African Socialism, those running from the "official" theories of Senghor and Kenyatta, to those of Sékou Touré, Nyerere and Nkrumah.[18] The crux of these theories is that tribal culture can pass directly to an advanced state of socialism, a new communalism, without developing a capitalist society first. Tribal communalism was not, however, the lot of all in Africa, especially not in the great empires of Mali and Songhai, which are most often used to bolster the image of the African past.

In literary criticism a similar use and misunderstanding of tradition occurs. African art, within its oral setting, is without question at radical odds with the elitist, text-centered official art of the West--and of contemporary Africa. Yet the egalitarian principles of traditional, i.e. tribal, art are alleged to carry over into neo-African art, which, also in accord with the tendencies described above, becomes a reversed mirror-image of Western art, anti-individualist and functional, rather than *ohne Interesse*.

> In African poetry on the one hand the expression is always in the service of the content; it is never a question of expressing *oneself*, but of expressing something, and, indeed,

> with a view to the results, for African poetry exists as *function*. Nor is the African ever concerned with his inner nature, with *his* individuality.19

Like the proponents of African Socialism, Jahn here argues that the values of tribal culture carry over into the present, *in spite of* fundamental changes in the social and economic structures of contemporary Africa. His argument is as faulty as theirs. Whatever their childhood memories, contemporary African writers are quite far from the traditional and egalitarian sharing and participation of tribal art. The audience of African art is not the traditional African about whom much of it is written. Its audience is elsewhere, either geographically, in the West, or sociologically, in the university compounds and government villas of the large cities. And this problem is a function of a particular conflict, that of a literate and politically powerful elite, and an illiterate and politically-disorganized mass.

> Le paradoxe actuel de la littérature d'expression française africaine qui est d'être plus connue et plus lue à l'étranger qu'en Afrique, restera longtemps sans solution tant que nos écrivains seront coupés des masses populaires, et ils le demeuront aussi longtemps que ces dernière elles-mêmes ne seront pas promues, je ne dis pas à la culture (car les masses ont naturellement la leur et la vivent plus authentiquement que quiconque), mais à ce style particulier de culture que confèrent la lecture et l'écriture. 20

The "promotion" of the "popular masses" to literate culture means their political organization in their own terms, and possession of the tools of mass social organization.

The conflict within Africa is not that between the reified term "African Tradition", and another no less vague "modernity". It is rather between two social classes. When, precisely, African writers will no longer be cut off from the masses, their own culture, rooted in their privilege, will have disappeared, as will have the fragmented and disorganized cultures of exploitation experienced by those whom critics persist in calling "traditional". The new culture will not be a mere amplification and extension of the contemporary literate culture of the African elite.

An elemental reflex of literary critics is to define phenomena in terms of currents of thought, of schools, of, the connection should be clear, traditions. This tendency, by no means solely African, is wide-spread in periods of anomie, and has thus dominated European belles-lettres throughout this century. The fact that traditions are created to fit the needs of the present, and change as those needs change, has never prevented critics of almost all leanings from asserting that one poet is in the "mainstream" and another not. Historians are usually more frank: they admit that history is an apologia for the present. Literary criticism rarely attains such relativism.

The African preoccupation with tradition is, for reasons already alluded to, especially strong.[21] Although other currents of criticism exist, in particular those deriving from Fanon or from other more orthodox Marxists, that with the greatest appeal seeks out "echoes" of tradition:

> The most vocal and popular school of criticism in Africa is ancestralistic. Its interest in literature *qua* literature is only marginal, and it devotes its critical talents to detecting, first, the rebirth of African cultures in the

> growing mass of creative works in European languages, and, second, the characteristics that distinguish African literature from European literature. 22

Such criticism has an unidimensional perspective, a code which converts all content to a single end: assessing the African-ness of the literary work.

Fanon's response to the idea of a rebirth of African cultures was given in Les Damnés de la terre, and was a rebuke to "cultural" négritude.

> L'adhésion à la culture négro-africaine, à l'unité culturelle de l'Afrique passe d'abord par un soutien inconditionnel à la lutte de libération des peuples. On ne peut vouloir le rayonnement de la culture africaine si l'on ne contribue pas concrètement à l'existence des conditions de cette culture, c'est-à-dire à la libération du continent. 23

In other words, the rebirth of African culture can be perceived not in its reference to the past, but in its radical rupture with present domination. According to Fanon, time spent discussing the past is time diverted from the revolution.

Marxist aesthetic principles require literature to draw near to political activity, become in fact identical to it. Public affairs must become poetic affairs. Unfortunately, such a coincidence of poetic and public affairs is, for the moment, purely hypothetical, and would depend upon a social integration which, in Africa as elsewhere, is non-existent.

At first sight it may appear that critics insisting upon a retour aux sources are not too distant from this approach. This is not the case.

The two approaches are based upon different premises, and have different effects. The second tendency, that in which the elite co-opts the culture of those whom it dominates, is predicated upon a static vision of those cultures, upon an appropriation of "content" but not upon a change in the nature and role of the elite. Fanon, on the other hand, was hoping for a dynamic situation in which the two cultures would fuse, of a new political culture in which the elite would dissolve into the masses through a wide-spread common struggle.

The second aim of what Mpondo called "ancestralism", that of distinguishing European and African literatures, is also at odds with the Fanonian approach. The gap between those who would renew African culture by establishing an anthology of tales, legends and motifs, Tchicaya's "literary platform",[24] and those for whom the new culture will take root "from below", will be forged in the heat of political conflict, is irreconcilable. This repertoire of African motifs is most frequently cited as evidence of the African-ness of the new literature. But sometimes the connections between that literary platform and contemporary works of art are tenuous indeed.

> Rien de plus désespérant, en effet, que les soi-disant analyses de la littérature africaine qu'on rencontre ça et là dans les revues et les livres. Quand elles ne sont pas le fruit d'un impressionisme de bon ton--il y a quelque chose d'africain dans ce livre, un je ne sais quoi--voilà qu'on nous propose--particulièrement dans la critique anglo-saxonne--des influences, des filiations pour le moins hypothétiques. 25

We should not take Alain Ricard seriously when he singles out Anglo-Saxon criticism as particularly prone to fantasy. His impressions are coloured by his own culture. The Anglo-French rivalry has been left as a relic of the colonial days, and is now part and parcel of contemporary African criticism. But Ricard's weariness with endless _je-ne-sais-quoi_ is perfectly justified, as is his frustration with highly hypothetical claims of influence of tribal upon contemporary poetry. We have discussed at length one example, Senghor's attribution of Bantu purity to Tchicaya himself.

Michael Echeruo's "Traditional and Borrowed Elements", a carefully reasoned and documented performance of "Anglo-Saxon" criticism, is one of the rare examples of critical analysis of the purely literary problems underlying assertions of traditional influence. Echeruo concentrates upon four areas of investigation: technique, delivery, subject matter and language. What he discovers in the course of his perambulations is that a certain kind of comparison, that between modern Nigerian poetry in English and the oral tradition, is, in the light of the linguistic impermeability of the two, extremely complex. On the one hand, it becomes obvious that there is nothing remarkable in the fact

> ... that there are considerable influences from foreign poetry on indigenous Nigerian writing today. For the indebtedness of Nigerian poetry to foreign literature is, in the final analysis, part of the problem of the translation of a local sensibility and indigenous environment into an alien artifact: the English poem.[26]

On the other, and presupposing the critic's sensitivity to the very object before his eyes, the fact that other "influences"--including traditional ones--enter into a poem is also not in the least surprising.

Poetic imagination has the power and the license to seek out all cultural contexts, to transport all cultural baggage.

> The process of identifying influences--whether from traditional or from foreign sources--requires an exacting and sensitive appreciation of the poem and the imaginative power of the poet. There is no other meaningful process. 27

Echeruo's argument proceeds through lengthy reference and detail, through, for example, the revelation that Okigbo's elegy in honour of Yeats modelled on a Yoruba praise poem, the _oriki_, was in fact cribbed from an English text and translation of the _oriki_, and represents a considerable distortion of even that text. His point is that innumerable mediations are necessary to capture all of the information contained within a poem, and that these mediations are so numerous that the notion of traditional influence is not a very rewarding one. "We cannot say with great precision what in the traditional poetry has influenced what in the modern poetry".[28] Poetry is in essence so subtle and multifarious that its reduction to monolithic abstractions, such as that of Tradition, is to miss its point.[29]

Moreover, as Okigbo's use of Virgil in his "Four Canzones" demonstrates, the major Nigerian poets use any influence, any subject matter more or less in the same way. The theme and experience of exile, with its parallels in the "First Eclogue" of Virgil, is as African as any modern incarnation of an indigenous poetic tradition.

If little can be proven about the traditional affiliations of a contemporary African poem, the social background of literary practice certainly offers, on the other hand, a valid point of reference. The elitist, in terms of audience, and text-centered, in terms of the actual making of the art object, practice of Okigbo does not differ from that of Pound or any other modernist writer of English expression. And the range of possible influences and their total fusion into that "alien artifact" which is the poem, is good evidence of it. In other words, there are other literatures, that communal literature of the past from which contemporary cosmopolitians are free to lift the occasional motif, and that new literature of the future which will be able to take root only as African society changes radically. But contemporary Nigerian and British poetry belong in the same general category. The point to which Echeruo does not come openly, though it is implied throughout his essay, is that in fact very little separates contemporary African from Western literary practice.

His analysis of tradition and his very reasons for maintaining his distance from simplistic assertions of traditional influence, from "ancestralism", is a refined and self-conscious form of the usual means of relating contemporary works to the past: through what contemporary French critics call inter-textualité, the comparison of one element of one text with one of another across any barriers of language and context which may exist.[29] The nascent African literary tradition which speaks of "3,000 years of Black poetry",[30] including Egyptian love poetry, is one example of thorough-going, if unconscious, intertextuality. Gerald Moore has asserted the interconnection of all African texts, past and present, in his articles on "Time and Experience in African Poetry", and "The Image of Death in African Poetry". Most tribal cultures were noted for their reverence for their forebearers, and Ulli Beier is thus able to isolate the theme of the ancestors in Senghor's poetry, and tie it to an African tradition. If ritual and ceremony had a role to play in traditional religious life, then reference to ritual and even a certain ritualistic quality in the poetry of Okigbo can be taken by critics as examples of the intrusion of a traditional past into the poetry of the present. There are, needless to say, problems with such comparative ease.[31]

Between a spontaneous and a studied use of the theme of ancestors--and there is no way of knowing the portion of pose in Senghor's references, the extent to which he was consciously creating the themes of a literary tradition--lies the difference between a direct and "genuine" connection with the tradition and an artificial, stagey one. Gerald Moore's second article argues that the treatment of death in traditional and modern poetry is similar. There is no doubt that death is a major theme of traditional poetry; but death is a theme in all literatures. An African poet who deals with death will identify himself as African only if death is seen, traditionally, as a passing into another world of living spirits or ancestors, or as the subject of a search for meaning which will replace, while referring back to, the traditional tribal meaning of death. Wole Soyinka's "Death in the Dawn" is an example of the latter. In any of these cases it is difficult to determine whether the initial impulse was traditional or the result of the study of African culture, a study which has informed the poet that he is obliged to treat death in a particular way in order to express "his" culture. In fact it is always possible, and appears to be the case in Soyinka's poem, that a recent personal experience is the source of the poem, and that the poetic process has allowed a slow accumulation of images from all aspects of the poet's life, from his years of living in the tropics, and from his Western-style education. Another example is Okigbo's recurrent image of the protagonist before the shrine. A common tribal religious ritual was the offering before a shrine in a sacred grove, we are told. But Okigbo was an Ibo and in frequent contact with Catholic ritual, which is at times not greatly different. How much of Okigbo's shrine is owed to remembrance of shrines past; how much to a concentrated "rethinking" of the offertory and its implications; how much to the fact that the image allowed him to conflate symbols of two cultures? In other words, it is simple-minded to treat the poet as a passive receptacle of any current of thought.

Now all of these connections between the past and present have a certain literary validity. Okigbo's or Soyinka's or John Pepper Clark's use of traditional imagery, their recourse to the techniques, subject matter, and motifs of oral literatures as reconstructed into a literary system (Tchicaya's "literary platform"), are legitimate means of enriching literary content. Where the lie must be given is at any point, at any moment when critics assert that this "insertion" of tribal tradition is more than the verbal mastery of a very few poets and critics, within a literary system which is not only different from the tribal one (as different as Homeric epic art from Pound), but radically alien to those very masses who are presumed to be still under the influence of tradition, still close, in Senghor's expression, to the very "deepest" sources.

The difference in kind between oral and textual literatures is often overlooked by critics interested, for whatever reasons, in relating the past and the present. Thus Michael Crowder's clear statement of scepticism of 1966 was on at least one occasion deliberately misread:

> There is no readily apparent continuity between the creative writings of modern Nigerian authors and the traditional literature of Nigeria, which, with the exception of a certain amount of material in the Arabic script, was exclusively oral. Indeed, one is tempted to believe that the two are of a totally different nature and that any link between them is either a fiction of the expatriate critic's imagination or merely fortuitous. 32

Bernth Lindfors, whose career as critic has been constructed upon studies of the role reference to tradition plays in contemporary literature, especially in the novels of Tutuola and Achebe, persists in perceiving reference to the past as direct influence of the past.[33] Crowder's point was that the oral nature of traditional literature is so radically different that any influence is artificial, of a kind with, say, Okigbo's use of Virgil. This was implicit in Echeruo's article. And the underlying argument is not so much whether or not Igbo proverbs occur in the novels of Achebe, but how and why they occur. This, morover, is relevant not only in Lloyd Brown's sense according to whom the conscious artistry of Achebe enables him to contrast ironically not only levels but realms of reality,[34] but also in a deeper, more theoretical sense: how are the modes of creation and perception of textual literature different from those of oral literature? Phenomenologists like Dufrenne, trained in textual interpretation, are conditioned to perceive perception as it is textually perceived. They cannot bracket their own modes of bracketing. For reasons which are obvious, there can be no oral phenomenology. Our argument is that the more self-conscious textual artistry is attributed to an artist, the further he is from the purely traditional.

The introduction of print and the individualization of literary experiences it produces influences the very nature of the literary work. For a work which is perceived in common and at the same time with one's fellows does not partake of the static and inviolable nature of the subjective aesthetic experience. Literature practised in a public forum with perishable vocal instruments and literature practised by isolated and highly-schooled individuals, to whom the literary experience is contained in books and who have a monopoly over those books, are two disparate phenomena.

Dorson, who has bones to pick with everyone outside of the purest orthodoxy of folklore studies,[35] makes the point that oral literature does not cover all the ground referred to by African writers when they speak of tradition, that a study of the insertion of traditional elements into contemporary literature requires a firm foundation in folklore. The tradition spoken of by African writers includes tribal customs (for example, the Ibo wrestling of Achebe and the myths attached to the smith of Laye) and is more extensive than the purely literary tradition. Indeed, it includes all features of "traditional society". Knowledge of these features is sometimes acquired through direct contact, through memory, but also sometimes through study. To understand this, it is necessary to understand the distinction between a "spontaneous" insertion of traditional materials and a calculated one. Amos Tutuola exemplifies, the former.

Tutuola, whose works have been deluged with critical comment of late, is not writing out a formal conception of tribal tradition, but quite simply writing stories, in a rather strange English, in which he uses the materials which come to hand. He is unconscious of the Tradition and the Modern. He is a perfect instance of the situation Finnegan referred to in order to refute the notion that one either was or wasn't traditional:

> There is a tendency to think of two distinct and incompatible types of society--"traditional" and "modern" for instance--and to assume that the individual must pass from one to the other by some sort of revolutionary leap. But individuals do not necessarily feel torn between two separate worlds; they exploit the situation in which they find themselves as best they can. 36

In the first place, Tutuola uses plots, motifs and themes from tribal oral narrative in his own tales. The precise source of any given theme is difficult to pin down, to be sure, for Tutuola will have heard primarily, but not exclusively, Yorubá tales. In other words, accounting for his sources suffers the same ambiguities as accounting for any and all oral sources, the very orality, the dynamic and constantly evolving nature, of tribal tales making them hard to categorize. Nonetheless, there are basic plot types, basic themes, and it is possible to discover moments when Tutuola has an identifiable parallel, as Herskovits claims.[37] Harold Collins, who finds a score or more of parallels and "sources" for incidents in Tutuola's novels in collections of West African folktales, makes a similar claim.[38] The best work in this direction has in fact been done by Lindfors, who fulfills Dorson's criteria by approaching the question on three levels, biographical, internal, corraborative, and then also by referring to literary sources, in particular Tutuola's relationship with the Yoruba novelist D.O. Fagunwa.[39]

For most critics of Tutuola, he is essentially a transitory phenomenon:

> The uniqueness of Tutuola's works rest on this ability to assimilate elements peculiar to the oral tradition to elements peculiar to the literary tradition: in other words, to impose a literary organization over essentially oral narrative material. He thus represents an example of a transitory state in the formal artistic evolution from a purely oral narrative tradition to a purely literary narrative tradition. 40

Tutuola is portrayed as a product of two worlds, and is particularly relevant for what he communicates about the earlier of the two. The need to pigeon-hole texts written by someone who never learned to conform to Western genres has, on occasion, lead to the assertion that they are quite simply folktales, written out in sub-standard English, that they "accurately reflect the structure of the folktales that have inspired him",[41] though no proof is forthcoming because the "structure" of the African folktale, in either a Proppian or any other sense, is unknown. Encountered in print, traits considered traditional are taken as proof that the Traditional and Modern have merged. But Tradition and Modernity are our ideas, the ideas of the modern era. Tutuola's story is foremost a text produced in certain circumstances, for certain audiences, whose material techniques and modes of existence as a literate work of literature have little in common with the tradition ones.

This is clearer when the same phenomenon,the insertion of traditional semantic content into a modern form,is "calculated". Tutuola's "naive" style tends to befuddle us into believing that he is naive. But writers as Achebe, Okigbo, or Soyinka are regular examples of the use of traditional material in modern wrapping. This is true both of linguistic colouring, of proverbs, pidgin, themes, but also of the larger entities, narrative techniques and genres. According to Bernth Lindfors, for example, the folktale is the paradigm underlying Achebe's The Arrow of God, and the proverb is responsible for much of its style.[42] Other critics maintain that the primarily narrative nature of African fiction can be traced to the oral tradition.[43]

There are two ways to account for these links between one realm and another: 1) there are inherent predispositions within Africans towards certain cultural traits--a racialist hypothesis which reaches full flower in both European racism and Senghorian négritude--, and

2) in practice, that through familiarity with the tribal past (the use of proverbs, the penchant for narrative rather than psychology, the thematic significance of ritual, the notion of death), contemporary writers can incorporate elements of the past into modern works. Most critics would now reject the first hypothesis. But many remain unaware of the consequences of the second. If the tribal tradition is one among many sources, then there is no privileged relationship between the tribal and the modern, except insofar as these writers _and their critics_ prefer, for psychological or political reasons of their own, to draw upon tribal traditions. That is, the preference for traditional material is _ideological_ in nature.

The model of cultural evolution implicit in the above critical commentary contains a number of unexamined presuppositions. Tradition is a shadow figure of modernity, its inversion. In anearlier chapter we saw how the connotations and attributes of "Africa" were also subject to a play of oppositions and contrasts. The kinship between these two paired terms, African and European, Tradition and Modernity, is striking.

Products of each other in a practically mathematical sense, Tradition and Modernity are presumed to be the component parts of the "new African", an amalgamation of the _old_ tribal and the _new_ Western ways.[44] The result is tautology, though tautology concealed by the complexity of the texts. If Tradition and Modernity are already defined in terms of one another, their synthesis is empty of meaning. The reiteration of their content is purely rhetorical, that is, in the original sense of the word, persuasive.

Here we enter into a fundamental debate over how models are used to describe *and to influence* the perception of reality, and who uses them. The interests of the African elite are that the key topics of contemporary ideology be the lost tribal traditions and the conflict between African and Western cultural values. The elite seeks to associate itself with the positive terms of each pair. Western interests are analogous:

> Fréquemment les spécialistes occidentaux basent leurs analyses de la littérature africaine sur les notions de "heurt de civilisation" ou de "conflit de cultures" en identifiant à la suite de Spengler la société, la civilisation et la culture. Par la suite, si les peuples opprimés se soulèvent contre les colonisateurs européens, ce n'est pas une protestation contre l'oppression nationale, raciale, socio-politique, culturelle, mais tout simplement le résultat de la fatale "incompatibilité" de l'Orient et de l'Occident. Et pour résoudre cette contradiction il est nécessaire pas tent la libération des peuples, que la synthèse des cultures opposées, possible "à condition que les parties intéressées se comprennent mutuellement". 45

Or, as another Soviet critic pointed out, referring to two famous Western "Africanizers":

> We might add that British and American policy in Nigeria had in Beier and Moore two clever and able ideological agents for the creation of the desired atmosphere in University circles and the literary world. Unlike the criticism levelled against négritude by writers like David Diop, Semben Ousman and Mongo Beti, Beier's attack was aimed from the Right, and his chief target was the poetry of social ideas. 46

Agents do not have to be conscious of what they are doing, they must merely act for. Be it out of exoticism, of scholarly curiosity, or of political creed, Western critics who underscore the cultural aspects of Africa at the expense of the political ones divert attention from Western exploitation of that continent.

Jahn was right, however, in singling out the British anthropologist Malinowski as a typical spokesman for those who would treat African literature as a hybrid of cultural currents.[47] Malinowski's thesis may be more articulate than naive statements of cultural conflict, but its outlines are the same. Two cultural systems purportedly deduced from observation, are taken as both determinate and determinant. Reality is described as a synthesis of the two systems, but one which slips inexorably in the direction of the stronger of the two terms, Western technological civilization. The implications are obvious. The inevitability of Western-style civilization is implicit in the very formulation of the paradigm. Evolution is towards Modernity. Tradition is over.

Those who struggle against this drift are supposedly justified in attacking the superficial, cultural manifestations of Western influence, dress, place names, etc., but not in calling into question the very framework of analysis. Theories of culture conflict are in fact theories not of conflict but of assimilation, of illusory progress towards a future Modernity.

There are two methodological problems with such a model. The first resides in the very nature of the entities contrasted: "currents" of thought, Tradition and Modernity are themselves reifications. Their combination and permutation are metaphysical.

The second derives from that same choice of entities: history is a scene of conflict and contradiction, but the model of culture conflict conjures away conflict.

Even the most subtle elaborations of culture conflict theories are unable to transcend these faults. Sunday Anozie's Sociologie du roman africain set out to break away from the simplicities of the image of the man caught between two worlds.[48] He deliberately chose to examine what he calls his second "determination" under the theme of "problematic individuals" rather than that of men "between two worlds"-- "dont nous rejetons ici, par des citations concrètes, la démarche tendancieuse et le pseudo-scienticisme".[49] This change in terminology does not alter his analysis.

Within the first of his three determinations (types of heros in the African novel) the novelist intentionally draws links with the traditional past. There are two ways of conceiving these links, according to Anozie: either contemporary literature is interpreted as a "prolongement de la littérature orale et du folklore africain"; or it is considered "le vêhicule authentique d'une vision du monde traditionnelle africaine".[50] Tutuola is given as example of the former tendency insofar as he fills two roles reserved to the raconteur in traditional society, the moralist and the entertainer, and does so through traditional tales and themes. The second potential link is established through the representation of individuals within the traditional past, the examples being Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God. Both of these lines of thought conform with what we have above called valid literary connections with tradition, but as such do not differ in nature from equivalent integrations of primitivism, pastoral or folk material into contemporary Western art.

Anozie's second determination, the "intro-active", occurs when culture conflict is transposed onto an "existential" or "tragic" plane. His distinction between authors who are merely documenting conflict between Tradition and Modernity and those who raise the dilemma onto a higher allegorical or metaphysical level is pertinent. But this nuance does not alter the underlying principles of the culture conflict, not the structures of the works which express it. They are inevitably symmetrical in shape. Their organizing principle is that of friction between two polarized entities. This symmetry is evident in Anozie's own diagrammes of the structures of L'Aventure ambigue and Le Regard du roi.[51] One side of these charts represents the traditional world and values, the other the Western ones. And when there is an internal chronological development, its very movement is symmetrical. It would be worthwhile to ask whether such symmetry, such elegance, indeed, the very use of diagrams does not respond to the exigencies of Anozie's own discourse, originally a Sorbonne thesis, and not to the requirements of their object of study. But in either case, our observations remain relevant, for at whatever level the rhetorical patterns of symmetry and polarity occur, whether within the novels or within criticism, they are part of the same ideological system.

The third determination, the extro-active, leads to but does not quite reach the exit from the contradictions of cultural conflict. There is a telling difference between the hero who seeks to resolve his conflict internally, and he whose conflict is external and political. The three stages upon which Anozie claims social conflict is played out are those of colonialism, or urbanization, and of the hero's political situation. The last is particularly of interest, for the hero's anxieties derive from the socio-political plight of his country.[52] But in all three cases, the hero's desire for a limitless individual liberty is the veritable cause of conflict. The new popular hero remains still-born, still at grips with his private frustrations, still a man of two worlds.

In the words of Wole Soyinka, the new battery of themes results from the breakdown of unity against an external enemy:

> The background starts at the united opposition by the colonized to the external tyrant. Victory, of sorts, came and the writer submitted his integrity to the monolithic stresses of the time. For this any manifesto seemed valid, any ism could be embraced with a clear conscience. With few exceptions the writer directed his energies to enshrining victory, to re-affirming his identification with the aspiration of nationalism and the stabilization of society. The third stage, the stage at which we find ourselves, is the stage of disillusionment. 53

Such novels as Soyinka's own The Interpreters, Ouologuem's Le Devoir de violence, Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, Laye's Dramouss, exemplify in one way or another this phase of disillusionment whose underlying cause is, once again, the cracks within the ideological façade of the new African State. Sentimental solidarity with the masses marks the works of most writers of the new African literary elite; but their awareness that this solidarity, especially when conveyed by governmental circles, is illusory, and their inability to resolve the contradictions of their own positions has lead to an ideological rupture with traditionalism.

Insofar, however, as that ideological fracture is plastered over by reinforced reference to and reverence for traditional ways, or to "conflict" between past and present, African literary ideology remains in a cul-de-sac. Traditionalism confuses and inverses the issues. Supra-individualism is a real possibility only in post-modern societies. Yet traditionalism continues to exploit the ambiguity and frustrations of individualism by expropriating to itself concepts of communal action--effectively eradicating any potential of communal action by relegating it to a purely ideological realm. Anozie's conclusion is within this line of thought:

> La conciliation ou intégration de ces deux notions de l'artiste--la notion traditionnelle qui postule l'individu comme une négativité, la notion moderne qui revendique l'individu comme une positivité--est une tâche que chaque romancier ouest-africain doit résoudre pour lui-même.[54]

The cards are already stacked: each artist is to resolve the problem _for himself_. His choice, ideologically-speaking, has therefore already been made. Discussion serves to reinforce the premises upon which it is founded. It is a _petitio principii_.

Tradition is a deceptive concept which diverts attention from privilege and from the present. Within literary criticism, concern for tradition leads to unidimensional interpretations of a venerated canon, and raises a lengthy series of _faux problèmes_. As it happens, this is true both from a conservative point of view, that of Echeruo to whom each judgement of literary influence is of necessity so complex that no special status for traditional influence ought be maintained, and from a progressive point of view. Self-styled guardians of tradition and its values, those who set themselves up as the solely qualified interpreters of texts have much to gain from the weighing and assaying of influence: the show is all theirs. Their own marginality both in terms of audience affected and concrete historical impact is veiled by the sanctity of their privileged profession, of their monopoly of meaning. Their hermeneutic principles are in any case erroneous: based upon a static and hypostatized model of history, their exegesis is beside the point: compared to the differences between the African elite and the masses, those between Western and African _littérateurs_ are trivial.

Tradition is, in the present context, a luxury, and the criticism which is its vehicule has, unless it explicitly defines its own context, the same status as the imported Western consumers goods which jam supermarket shelves in residential compounds of Africa.

FOOTNOTES: TRADITION AND MODERNITY

[1] D.C. Gordon, *History and Self-determination in the Third World.* Princeton, 1971.

[2] *Ideology and Utopia*. New York,

[3] Pierre Kuentz, "Le 'Rhétorique' ou la mise à l'écart", *Communications*, 16 (1970), p. 156.

[4] Kenneth W. Clarke and Mary W. Clarke, *Introducing Folklore*. New York, 1963, p. 8.

[5] George Boas, *Essays on Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages*. Baltimore, 1948. Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art*. New York, 1967. A.O. Lovejoy and George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity*. New York, 1965.

[6] Richard M. Dorson discusses a classic case, "The Question of Folklore in a New Nation", in Bruce Jackson (ed.), *Folklore and Society*. Hatboro, Penn., 1966, pp. 21-35.

[7] Richard M. Dorson, *Folklore and Folklife*. Chicago, 1972, pp. 16-7.

[8] Jean Capans, *Anthropologie et impérialisme*. Paris, 1974.

9 "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context", in Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman (eds.), Towards New Perspectives in Folklore. Austin, 1972, p. 14.

10 Ben-Amos, ibid., p. 13.

11 Richard M. Dorson, African Folklore. New York, 1972, p. 59.

12 So obvious it is often forgotten. By the same token, there is no oral phenomenology. See below.

13 "Four Canzones", in Black Orpheus, 11 (1962), pp. 5-9.

14 Samir Amin, "Le Modèle théorique d'accumulation", Tiers-Monde, XII, no. 52 (octobre-novembre 1972), p. 723.

15 James Olney, Tell Me Africa. Princeton, 1974.

16 As examples, Birago Diop, Contes choisis. Cambridge, 1967; Tchicaya U Tam'si, Légendes africaines. Paris, 1968; M.S. Eno-Belinga, Littérature et musique populaires en Afrique noire. Toulouse, 1965.

17 Janheinz Jahn, Muntu. New York, 1961, p. 135.

18 Yves Bénot, Idéologies des indépendences africaines. Paris, 1969.

[19] Jahn, Muntu. p. 148.

[20] Paulin Houndtondji, "Charabia et mauvaise conscience", Présence Africaine, 61 (1er 1967), p. 31.

[21] This preoccupation shows through in the critical criteria surveyed by D.R. Bishop, "African Critics and African Literature: a Study of Critical Standards, 1947-1966", Dissertation Abstracts International, XXXII (1971), p. 420A.

[22] Simon Mpondo, "Provisional Notes on Literature and Criticism in Africa", Présence Africaine, 78 (2e 1971), p. 132.

[23] Frantz Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre. Paris, 1970, p. 164.

[24] Tchicaya U Tam'si, Légendes africaines, p. 22.

[25] Alain Ricard, "Sociologie du roman africain", Research in African Literature, 2 (1971), p. 211.

[26] Michael Echeruo, "Traditional and Borrowed Elements in Nigerian Poetry", Nigeria Magazine, 89 (June 1966), p. 144.

[27] Echeruo, ibid., p. 150.

[28] Echeruo, *ibid.*, p. 142.

[29] See Julia Kristeva, *Sèmèiotikè: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*. Paris, 1969. Kristeva et al, *Essais de Sémiotique*. Paris, 1971. Or A.J. Heima, *Sémantique structurale*. Paris, 1966.

[30] Alan Lomax and Raoul Abdul (eds.), *3000 Years of Black Poetry*. New York, 1970.

[31] Ulli Beier, "The Theme of the Ancestors in Senghor's Poetry", *Black Orpheus*, 5 (1959), pp. 15-7; O.R. Dathorne, "Ritual and Ceremony in Okigbo's Poetry", *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 5 (July 1968), pp. 79-91; Gerald Moore, "Time and Experience in African Poetry", *Transition*, 26 (1966), pp. 18-22; Gerald Moore, "The Imagery of Death in African Poetry", *Africa*, XXXVII (1968), pp. 57-70; Nancy Schmidt, "Nigerian Fiction and the African Oral Tradition", *Journal of the New African Literature and the Arts*, 2 (1970), pp. 25-38.

[32] Michael Crowder, "Tradition and Change in Nigerian Literature", *Tri-Quarterly*, 5 (1966), pp. 117-8.

[33] Bernth Lindfors, *Folklore in Nigerian Literature*. New York, 1973. His attack on Crowder is in "Critical Approaches to Folklore in African Literature", in Dorson (ed.), *African Folklore*, New York, 1972, p. 229.

34 "Cultural Norms and Modes of Perception in Achebe's Fiction", Research in African Literature, III, 1 (1972), pp. 21-35.

35 "Africa and the Folklorist", in African Folklore. New York, 1972, pp. 3-67.

36 Ruth Finnegan, Oral Literature in Africa. Oxford, 1970, p. 54.

37 Melville and Frances J. Herskovitz, Dahomean Narrative. Evanston, 1958, p. 13.

38 Harold Collins, "Founding a New National Literature; the Ghost Novels of Amos Tutuola", Critique, 4 (1960), p. 21.

39 Bernth Lindfors, "Amos Tutuola: Debts and Assets", Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, 10 (1970), pp. 306-34.

40 E.N. Obiechina, "Amos Tutuola and the Oral Tradition", Présence Africaine, 65 (1968), p. 106.

41 Collins, "Founding a New National Literature", p. 20.

42 Lindfors, "The Folktale as Paradigm in Chinua Achebe's The Arrow of God", Studies in Black Literature, I, 1, pp. 1-15; The Palm Oil with which Achebe's Words Are Eaten", African Literature Today, 1 (1968), pp. 3-18.

[43] Nancy Schmidt, *op. cit*.

[44] As in A.C. Brench, *The Novelists' Inheritance in French Africa.* Oxford, 1967.

[45] F.M. Breskina, "Problème du heurt des époques dans la prose de l'Afrique occidentale", in *L'Afrique dans les études soviétiques, 1968*. Moscou, 1970. p. 376.

[46] Y.L. Galperina, "Under the Sign of Ogun: the Young Writers of Nigeria, 1960-65", in *Africa in Soviet studies annual 1969*. Moscow, 1971, p. 167.

[47] Jahn, *Muntu*. p. 14.

[48] Paris, 1970.

[49] Anozie, *Sociologie...*, p. 10.

[50] Anozie, *ibid*., p. 10.

[51] Anozie, *ibid*., pp. 159 and 177.

[52] Anozie, *ibid*., p. 60.

[53] in: Per Wästerberg (ed.), Afro-Scandinavian Writers' Conference. New York, 1967, p. 16.

[54] Anozie, Sociologie..., p. 247.

CHAPTER SIX: ARIEL'S TONGUE

The relationship between Prospero, the Renaissance Duke in exile, and Caliban, the native subdued by his occult powers, is often used to illustrate the colonial relationship of master and slave. The former imposes not only his will and his ways, but his tongue. The latter, having mastered it, is then obliged to use it in spite of himself. This reading of The Tempest applies, and has been applied, to situations as far apart as Madagascar and the New World, the Antilles and Africa.

The parallel is a seductive one which helps sum up the complex patterns created when race, language, and culture cross in a colonial context. A third character of the same play, Ariel, subsumes the roles and choices the intellectual has in such circumstances.[1] And the polysemic poetry of Shakespeare offers an opportunity for pages of play: in a humanist vein rarely seen in African criticism, John Pepper Clark enumerates the manifold uses of Prospero's tongue an African writer can use without dissolving into identity with him.[2]

But for all its richness as symbol, as Fernández Retamar calls it,[3] as shorthand for psychological complex, as Mannoni uses it,[4] and as literary image, as Lamming applies it,[5] the paradigm remains fairly unidimensional. Its polar structure is instantly apparent:

$$\frac{\text{Prospero}}{\text{Caliban}} = \frac{\text{Europe}}{\text{Africa}}$$

Although Prospero and, it follows, Europe, were originally the positive sides of the comparison, Caliban and Africa readily become so themselves through the process noted many times above. In the dialectic between text and context of which any motif partakes, the Shakespearean play itself acquires new overtones. Adaptations, such as Césaire's Une tempête,[6] single out particular aspects of the original texts. The codes underlying our perceptions of colonizers and colonized are modified.

Africa, having become connected with Caliban, is endowed with all the connotations we can draw from the role. The cursing on which Caliban prides himself becomes an emblem for a whole current of Black literature, that exemplified by Césaire's Cahier, the tormented poems of Léon Damas, or those of David Diop.

> You taught me language, and my profit on't
> Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language. (I,i), 425-27.

The consciousness of speaking in an alien medium, but of having no other in which to speak, permeates almost all African writing. Fanon's Peau noire, masques blancs is an eloquent statement of the dilemma. The intense fear on the part of intellectuals of making the slightest mistake in French is one of its side-effects.[7] And the decision which haunts many African states over which language to foster as official is yet another of its ramifications.[8]

Caliban's confusion and hesitation between his new and his former language, but grammarless grunts and groans in Prospero's eyes, is at the heart of the literary symbol; it also serves the needs of those of a more political bent, the editors of Caliban: a Journal of New World Thought and Writing.[9] Like any other motif, Don Juan, Faust, etc., that of Prospero and Caliban bears the print of the motives of those who use it.

African literary culture is to all intents and purposes written in Prospero's tongue. The issue of how much remains of Caliban's tongue is still hotly debated, and this discussion often corresponds to that of the "ancestralistic" tendencies described above, who devote their "critical talents to detecting the rebirth of African cultures in the growing mass of creative works in European languages".[10] What goes on "in the head" of bilingual persons is hypothetical at this stage of linguistic science, and criticism interested in the effects of the intermingling of two languages in literature must, instead, confine themselves to textual observations, to concrete detail rather than abstract principle.[11]

For example, the remarks of Senghor or those, related, of Jahn according to which African language excels in image and rhythm are harmfully impressionistic.[12] In their faith in the principle of *parole*, of *nommo*, of the creative power of language, both have simply confused what a culture says about itself and what that culture does, a practice roughly equivalent to taking the European powers at their word when they spoke of a civilizing mission in Africa. The *nommo* theory, which has echoes as far away as the United States,[13] is derived not from study of the societies to which it is imputed but from the myths of those societies.[14] Rhythm, the other purported attribute of African languages, is obviously an important factor in artistic expression in tribal Africa--as is it the world over. The specificity of African rhythms is well-known, though sometimes hard to pin down.[15] Yoruba poetry, to take one example, "has no metre comparable to European poetic systems", but its rhythmic constraints are as dependent upon its linguistic means as those of poetry in any language.[16] The rhythms vaunted by Jahn and Senghor are specific, but not special. To ascribe to Africans a facility for rhythm, for emotion, amounts to ascribing to Europeans a remarkable faculty for reason.

These pitfalls are, not surprisingly, similar to those which arise during discussions of cultural synthesis. Synthesis has a logic of its own, which may not be that of reality. And most evidence indicates that cross-linguistic reference in literature is intentional, rather than "spontaneous"; that is, it conforms to the literary practice of Western modernism, particularly as demonstrated in the allusive poetry of Pound, Eliot, and, in Africa, Okigbo. The colonizing powers succeeded marvelously in acquiring the allegiance of the African elite not only to the languages of Prospero, but his ways of making literature.

One reason Prospero's language is an issue of such importance is fairly clear: the highly-charged ideological atmosphere surrounding all the connotations of Europe and Africa. But the very number and variety of African languages themselves is another cause of confusion. The actual number depends upon what one takes to be a separate language and what one takes as a dialect.[17] The official languages of African states are spoken as mother tongue by a minute percentage of the population. Inversely, indigenous languages rarely have sufficient speakers, prestige, or hegemony to warrant their establishment as national languages, and their elevation to this status would stir up inter-tribal jealousies. For this reason, and with the exception of those East African states which have chosen Swahili as their national language,[18] most have stuck with the "international" European languages imposed during colonization. The choice may be, from the point of view of policy, a reasonable one. Multilingualism may well appear inevitable, and in actual practice many Africans may well be multilingual. But ideology has instead decried the ontological insecurity which knowledge and the interference of a foreign language is said to produce. And in fact there are political repercussions, the most important of which is the reinforcement of the barriers between elite and masses, which follow from having non-African "official" languages.

The issue is not simply that of knowledge of a foreign language, as it would be within an academic or cosmopolitan elite, but a more complex one in which the European language is part of social practice, an alienating system of discrimination and exploitation. At the same time, what is believed about language parallels what is believed about identity, about nation, about societies and civilizations.

In the first place, "choice" of language enters into the dialectic of identity and difference. The negative values which European languages have within this dialectic does not in the least prevent them from being the main material support of African culture within the elite.

This paradox reflects serious problems within the culture of that elite. Ulli Beier's 1957 remarks are concise, though slightly out of date:

> The West African poet writing in a European language finds himself in a difficult position. He is almost bound to be a nationalist, and more often than not he is actively engaged in the fight for self-government. His poetry is naturally concerned partly with a criticism and rejection of European values--and yet he has to use a European language to express the same rejection. 19

This poet's problem is also one for any member of the elite, and, now that "self-government" has been achieved, true of the new rulers. Strictly speaking, a proponent of African values need only open his mouth to condemn himself. Shared by francophone intellectuals in North Africa, by all mandarins, this conundrum is particularly sharp in Africa, where there is no immediate general replacement for European languages.

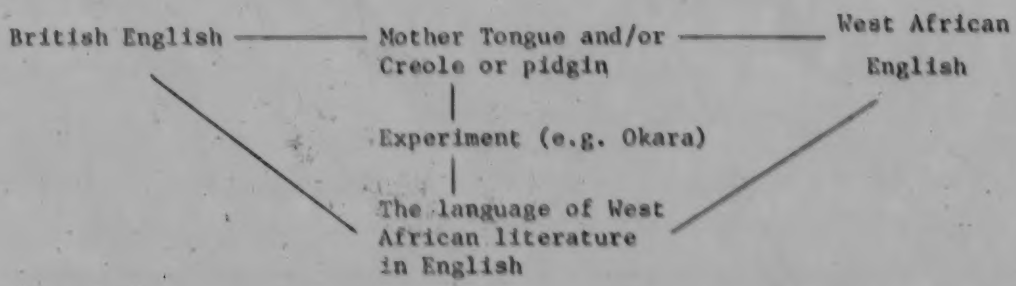
The African elite thus lives a permanent schizophrenia, torn between two worlds, between "English Words, African Lives".20 Fanon's Peau noire, masques blancs is, once again, germane, for it early on delineated the relationship between psychological disorders, racism, and language. At this stage of his development, Fanon was still responding to the thématique of négritude, still working out its implications in his therapeutic practice. His failure to resolve neurosis on a patient-by-patient basis led him to propose social solutions. Houndtondji's "Charabia et mauvaise conscience" is in the same line of thought.[21] The fear of grammatical mistake is indicative of an underlying malaise, the refusal to accept oneself as African. The real dilemma of the "colonized intellectual" (an expression which falsely implies that those intellectuals were there before they were colonized, before that caste was created by colonialism) comes when he asks the materialist question: who says what to whom, and who profits from it. The intellectual proficient solely in a European language is cut off from the masses, from the very people with whom he is supposed to identify.

When there is mass multilingualism, the clear ideological lines between one language and another, as well as their supposed essences and qualities, blur. The fascination of pidgin, and its value for literari trained to believe in the purity of linguistic traditions, is its dynamism and fluidity. Not so much a "third way", a synthesis of two traditions, as a creative response on the part of populations to their needs, pidgins underline the mystery of language by their very transience, their refusal to be fixed.[22] Hence the difficulty of using pidgin in literature in more than marginal ways, for a pidgin is by definition a language of daily use, and its use in literature is therefore founded upon an automatic transformation of it. Although this is to some extent the case when any language is made literary (it is transformed and crystallized),[23] it is especially so with pidgin, which has no written form, however regular it may be. A sustained work in pidgin is therefore not to be expected, all the more since speakers of pidgin have, again by definition, greater facility in a prior language. A creole, a pidgin which has been taught as a native language to children, is much more likely to be a written language. Krio, a widely-used English creole in Sierra Leone, is. There is, moreover, no intrinsic reason why creoles cannot be the base of a popular literature, but in practice they have not become so very often.[24]

Pidgins, or forms which aspire to pidgin, enter literature in three ways.

The first, exemplified by the stories of Tutuola, is a spontaneous creation of language by a speaker with an "imperfect" grasp of English, and thus is frequently labelled "pidgin", though by definition it is not. The second, of which Gabriel Okara's novel *The Voice* is the best example, is an artificial stylistic creation which aims at representing features of both English and an indigenous language, that which in a daily and spontaneous way pidgin in fact achieves. Achebe is a master of the third way, particularly in *A Man of the People*: the use of passages of pidgin to build character or play off different levels of society one against the other.

All of these phenomena are interrelated, and combine within African literature. All "levels" of language are simultaneously available to an African writer, and to many African speakers. If a formal West African literary English develops, it will by using all of these forms. Peter Young's model[25] for this development follows:


British English
Mother Tongue and/or Creole or pidgin
West African English
Experiment (e.g. Okara)
The language of West African literature in English

English in West Africa, either in literature or in everyday life, is therefore potentially more complex than some would lead us to believe.

This diversity is not uniquely linguistic, for it is possible to view Tutuola and Achebe as also incorporating traditional elements, motifs, tales, symbols, and so forth into their works. And to a certain extent their doing so fulfills the requirements of négritude. Eldred Jones's comment about Soyinka, once the most vigorous of those opposed to négritude, certainly applies to Achebe and some other anglophone writers, as well:

> In many minds, particularly minds unfamiliar with his work, Soyinka is permanently installed as the arch opponent of négritude, while in fact his work exhibits all that négritude was essentially about, bar the shouting. Few writers have used the totality of African experience to greater purpose. [26]

But even in cases as wooden as Okara's, where an artificial language has been wrought, and where therefore the bare intentions of cultural synthesis are there for all to see, these forms of stylistic invention and reference to indigenous and popular language do more than incorporate "native" material.

Okara's novel is an ambiguous one. Its linguistic recipe is bi-polar.[27] Starting with a version in Ijaw,[28] and then translating it into English, but imperfectly, leaving for example the excessive gerundive formations which are a feature of Ijaw, Okara attempted a fusion of two languages. (This is, incidentally, not Tutuola's technique; he writes directly into English, contrary to what some have thought.)[29] Unfortunately, the experiment is awkward, however "poetic" it may be at times.

Achebe's use of proverbs, and what Lindfors calls "Yoruba and Igbo Prose Styles in English",[30] are evidence of a native linguistic tradition, and other ways of demonstrating the presence of Caliban in African literature, as John Pepper Clark put it. These phenomena occur within a given context, and are part of a complete artistic unity which subordinates the fragment of popular speech to the role it plays within the work. As Lloyd Brown points out, Achebe's use of pidgin or popular speech is the same as his use of other forms of language,[31] much as Okigbo's use of African tradition was akin to his use of the international literary tradition. Language levels are only one of other devices underlying the vision of the novels, that of cultural conflict.

When, on the other hand, critics analyze a text, as Jahn did with Tutuola's The Palm Wine Drinkard, seeking out a trait which is ideologically meaningful, rhythm, the results are unfortunate.[32] The rhythms of even Tutuola's text are, unless some proof to the contrary be presented, as African, or non-African, as Gertrude Stein's, or, for that matter, Jahn's own prose. The linguistic procedures for verifying what an "African" rhythm would be are as yet unknown. But rhythm in the connotative system which is Jahn's and others of the "neo-African" school, is positive.

How much different is the analysis of Afolyaya, "Languages and Sources of Amos Tutuola".[33] His sober discussion is, it is true, removed from the heated atmosphere surrounding The Palm Wine Drinkard at its first appearance.[34] Europeans such as Dylan Thomas were at first passionate about the work, its vitality, its originality; African critics were insulted by the European readiness to praise what is from one point of view illiteracy. Nigerian critics are now moving back towards an acceptance of Tutuola, and Western critics have integrated him into their repertoire of resources suitable for mining folk motifs and traditions.

The early rejection of Tutuola was one revealing instance of the fundamental principle of African literary criticism we quoted in our introduction, but this time in the original sense of the words: "In the new literature of Africa written in a number of European languages, the issue of literacy lies at the bottom of much of the criticism".[35]

The conflict between Prospero and Caliban has born fruit differently in English and in French. There has been practically no tampering with the canons of standard French, and local linguistic colour is segregated with italics. In English, on the other hand, there has been much distortion of the international language, not only in the experiments of Okara and in Tutuola, but in the poems of John Pepper Clark, "The Imprisonment of Obtala", in which the aim is an English whose "accumulated impact will tend away from that cultural area we call'English' and back to the indigenous one".[36] But the ebullience of an Okigbo, whose flashy use of allusions and whose aspirations to the most cosmopolite of cultures, is also evidence of a need to assimilate, rather than be assimilated by, Prospero's culture. Language in African literature is a touchy topic. English is not what Gerald Moore so euphemistically calls it in his title The Chosen Tongue.[38] It has been imposed, and is still perceived as Prospero's tongue.

But both are also still the medium of an elite, and herein lies the crux of the paradoxes and conflicts above, and why we have referred to "Ariel's tongue", not Prospero's. For if the African intellectual speaks Prospero's tongue all the while he makes himself out to be Caliban, there remains another whole body of people who do not speak it, and who, questions of language aside, fit the description of Caliban much better than any relatively privileged intellectual. The great mass of the African peasantry are perhaps better stand-ins for Caliban. And the intellectuals who cater to Prospero but share with Caliban the trait of being imprisoned in Prospero's Cell are much more akin to Ariel, the airy spirit who was freed from Sycorax's spell by the former. Ariel, a "spirit too delicate/ To act her earthy and abhorred commands", was cast by Sycorax, mother of Caliban, into a cloven pine. And in exchange for his servitude, Ariel was released, by Prospero's know-how, _savoir-faire_. Casting themselves into the role of Caliban by emphasizing the linguistic sides of the motifs, intellectuals create the illusion that the real conflict is between themselves and the Western master, whereas, as Ariel, they are the latter's servant. And the confusions of the intellectual who remains "correspondent to command", brother in bondage to Caliban but indebted to Prospero, are those of Ariel, vacillating between distrust of his master, and fear of being returned to a Calibanesque state.

Of course the dilemma is not to be resolved within the terms of the Prospero motif. But the motif and its internal logic can be used ideologically, either to promote or thwart the cause of Caliban, the masses. Obsession with the tongue Prospero, Ariel, or Caliban speaks has the effect of selecting out certain other pertinent traits of the motifs: that Ariel, himself a victim of Prospero perhaps, is not necessarily the ally of Caliban, that the submission of a Caliban to a Prospero affects not only Prospero's tongue, but who gets to do the speaking.

In a passage (in Césaire's adaptation of The Tempest[39]) with no parallel in Shakespeare, there occurs an encounter between Ariel, a creature of the air, also under the tutelage of Prospero, and Caliban, the révolté. We are to understand Ariel as the intellectual.

> ARIEL: Salut, Caliban! Je sais que tu ne m'estimes guère, mais après tout nous sommes frères, frères dans la souffrance et l'esclavage, frères aussi dans l'espérance. Tous deux nous voulons la liberté, seules nos méthodes diffèrent.
>
> CALIBAN: Salut à toi. Ce n'est quand même pas pour me faire cette profession de foi que tu es venu me voir! Allons Alastor! C'est le vieux qui t'envoie, pas vrai? Beau métier: exécuteur des hautes pensées du Maître. (35)

Caliban's intransigeance in the remainder of the passage, and his quick recognition that he and Ariel will be opposed as long as the latter remains within the sphere of influence of Prospero, including the mimickry of his methods, is intended to remind us of the gulf between the masses and the intellectuals who are imbued with Western culture. Ariel indeed is instilled with the liberal dream:

> ... J'ai souvent fait le rêve exaltant qu'un jour, Prospero, toi et moi, nous entreprendrions, frères associés, de bâtir un monde merveilleux, chacun apportant en contribution ses qualitées propres: patience, vitalité, amour, volonté aussi, et rigueur, sans compter les quelques bouffées de rêve sans quoi l'humanité périrait d'asphyxie. (38)

But Caliban knows better:

> Tu n'as rien compris à Prospero. C'est pas un type à collaborer. C'est un mec qui ne se sent que s'il écrase quelqu'un. Un écraseur, un broyeur, voilà le genre! Et tu parles de fraternité. (38)

The issue is precisely, first, whether Ariel recognizes the irreconciliability between Master and Slave, and second, whether or not he sides with his master for the sake of the few advantages he can hope to receive and the promise of freedom through evolution. Césaire's text has implications for revolutionary politics in general, to the extent that the line between reform and revolution lies precisely at the point where one recognizes the incorrigibility of the Master:

> ARIEL: Tu sais bien que ce n'est pas ce que je pense. Ni violence ni soumission. Comprends-moi bien. C'est Prospero qu'il faut changer. Troubler sa sérénité jusqu'a ce qu'il reconnaisse enfin l'existence de sa propre injustice et qu'il y mette un terme.
>
> CALIBAN: Oh là là. Laisse-moi rigoler! La conscience de Prospero! Prospero est un vieux ruffian qui n'a pas de conscience. (37)

If the Master is incapable of real change, then efforts to change him are futile and without aim: "Autant se mettre devant une pierre et attendre qu'il lui pousse des fleurs!" Yet, given the Master's absolute power, Ariel's solution is perhaps tempting, to work from within and reform the monster, even for the Master's own good. The ambiguity of the conflict is timeless and is at the crux of all progressive politics. But it has one more dimension, that, precisely, of the difference between Ariel and Caliban. For if Prospero can promise a certain freedom to Ariel and provide him with numerous side-benefits, Caliban is a creature of an entirely different order. Caliban's freedom marks the end of Prospero's reign. But as long as Ariel retains his calling as "executor of the Master's thoughts" and limits his actions to "troubling the Master's serenity", his protest is of no consequence. As Shakespeare's Ariel says to Prospero:

> I prithee,
> Remember I have done thee worthy service,
> Told thee no lies, made no mistakings, served
> Without or grudge or grumblings. (I, ii)

The intellectual's choice is, if sometimes camouflaged with folklore and the paraphernalia of primitivism, clear to those who count.

Fanon put it another way:

> ... toutes les preuves qui pourraient être données de l'existence d'une prodigieuse civilisation songhaï ne changent pas le fait que les Songhaïs d'aujourd'hui sont sous-alimentés, analphabètes, jetés entre ciel et terre, la tête vide, les yeux vides.[15]

Contemporary African culture must start from recognition of that incredible condition of the Third World, and develop from there. The intellectual's choice, Ariel's choice, between protest and the quest for power to end that exploitation is, in this sense, a choice between Prospero and Caliban. The idea of protest contains within it the hope that, out there, there is another culture, something other than the elitist, hierarchical and exploitative Western one. But mere protest, confined to Prospero's literary realm, for all the reasons we have discussed above, especially in chapters I and IV, will not alter Caliban's impotence.

5

FOOTNOTES: ARIEL'S TONGUE

[1] For elaboration of this theme, and one of its Latin American variations, see Roberto Fernández Retamar, "Caliban: Towards a Discussion of Culture in our America", *Massachusetts Review*, XV, 1-2 (Winter-Spring 1974), 7-72.

[2] John Pepper Clark, "The Legacy of Caliban", in *The Example of Shakespeare*. Evanston, 1970, pp. 1-38.

[3] Fernández Retamar, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-24.

5 [4] O. Mannoni, *La Psychologie de la colonisation*. Paris, 1950.

[5] George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile*. London, 1960.

[6] Aimé Césaire, *Une tempête*. Paris, 1969.

[7] Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire masques blancs*. Paris, 1952. J.P. Houndtondji, "Charabia et mauvaise conscience", *Présence Africaine*, 61 (1er 1967), pp. 11-31.

[8] Pierre Alexandre, *Langues et langage en Afrique noire*. Paris, 1967.

9 Massachusetts Review, XV, 1-2 (Winter, Spring 1974), was a prototype for the new Caliban, I, 1 (Fall 1975).

10 Simon Mpondo, "Provisional Notes on Literature and Criticism in Africa", Présence Africaine, 78 (2e 1971), p. 132.

11 "Good studies" are A. Afolaya, "Languages and Sources of Amos Tutuola", in Christopher Heywood (ed.), Perspectives on African Literature, New York, 1971, pp. 49-64. Berard Mafeni, "Nigerian Pidgin",in Spencer (ed.), The English Language in Africa. London, 1971, pp. 95-112.

12 Senghor, "L'Esprit de la civilisation", Présence Africaine, 8-9-10 (juin-novembre 1956), pp. 58-61. Jahn, Muntu. New York, 1961, pp. 132-40.

13 Arthur J. Smith, "Socio-Historical Perspectives of Black Oratory", in Smith (ed.), Language, Communication and Rhetoric in Black America. New York, 1972, pp. 295-305.

14 Especially from Marcel Griaule, Dieu d'eau. Paris, 1947, and such related works as Dominique Zahan, La Dialectique du verbe chez les Bambara. Paris, 1963.

15 Alan P. Merriam, "African Music", in William R. Bascom and Melville Herskovits (eds.), Continuity and Change in African Culture. Chicago, 1959, pp. 49-86.

16 Ulli Beier, Yoruba Poetry. London, 1970, p. 15. See also from our bibliography, Lasebikan, "The Tonal Structure...", Sow, "Notes sur...", Babalola, The Content and Form of Yoruba Ijala, the articles on tribal poetry in Beier, Introduction to African Literature, and in King, Introduction to Nigerian Literature.

17 This problem is magnified by the colonially-induced habit of many Africans of referring to their vernacular as a dialect.

18 Swahili was a trade language of Bantu-Arabic origin which was creolized. Ali Mazrui, "English Language and Political Consciousness in British Colonial Africa", Modern African Studies, 4 (1967), p. 303.

19 Ulli Beier, "The Conflict of Culture in West African Poetry", Black Orpheus, 1 (1957), p. 17.

20 Gerald Moore, "English Words, African Lives", Présence Africaine, English edition, 54 (1965), pp. 90-101.

21 Présence Africaine, 61 (1er 1967), pp. 11-31.

22 Charles Hockett, A Course in Modern Linguistics. New York, 1964, pp. 420-2.

23 The history of European vernaculars is relevant here. The literary form of Provençal and Tuscan fixed the language in only one of its dialectal forms.

24 Haitian creole is one example. But Quebec *joual*, especially in its literary forms, is not a true creole.

25 Peter Young, "The Language of West African Literature in English", in John Spencer (ed.), *The English Language in West Africa*. London, 1971, p. 183.

26 Eldred Jones, "The Essential Soyinka", in Bruce King (ed.), *Introduction to Nigerian Literature*. New York, 1971, p. 113.

27 Gabriel Okara, "African Speech--English Words", *Transition*, III, 10 (1963), 15-6.

28 For which see description in Elizabeth Dunstan, *Twelve Nigerian Languages*. New York, 1969.

29 Young, "The Language of West African Literature", p. 172.

[30] Bernth Lindfors, "The Palm Oil with which Achebe's Words Are Eaten", *African Literature Today*, 1 (1968), p. 3-18, and "Characteristics of Yoruba and Igbo Prose Styles in English", in Anna Rutherford (ed.), *Common Wealth*. Aarhaus, 1972, pp. 47-61. Both articles are in his *Folklore in Nigerian Literature*. New York, 1973.

[31] Lloyd Brown, "Cultural Norms and Modes of Perception in Achebe's Fiction", *Research in African Literature*, III, 1 (1972), 21-35.

[32] As did Jahn, *Muntu*. pp. 166-8.

[33] In Christopher Heywood, *Perspectives on African Literature*. New York, 1971.

[34] Harold Collins, *Amos Tutuola*. New York, 1969, p. 20.

[35] John Pepper Clark, *The Example of Shakespeare*. p. 19.

[36] Echeruo, "Traditional and Borrowed Elements in Nigerian Poetry", *Nigeria Magazine*, 89 (June 1966), p. 142.

[37] Chinua Achebe, "English and the African Writer", *Transition*, IV, 18 (1965), p. 30.

[38] London, 1969.

[39] Aimé Césaire, *Une tempête*. Paris, 1969. Pages numbered henceforth in parenthesis.

CHAPTER SEVEN: AFRICA AND THE NEW WORLD

Anyone who studies contemporary African cultures comes quickly upon a paradox and a terminological dispute which have never been resolved. We have already referred to the European origins of African philosophy.[1] Non-Africans were also at the origins of négritude.

Aimé Césaire and Léon Damas are from the New World. The Harlem Renaissance was as well instrumental in the development of négritude which was formed in Paris, and whose other main leaders were Senegalese, the most "Frenchified" of the Africans. And a whole gamut of critics prefers to talk not of African culture, but of "Negro-African" or "Neo-African" cultures, terms which enable them to take in the New World.[2]

That Paris played an important part in the development of the culture of the African elite is far from surprising in the light of the economics of publishing and education in the former French colonies. Since Paris was also the centre for the Antilles and to a lesser extent for Latin-American elites, the "influence" of New World figures and movements upon négritude is fairly easy to account for. The fact that the forces which influenced Africa were already "Africanizing" merits, however, a closer look. The best way to put the question is: what part does the image of Africa have in the inner logic of various New World "négritudes"?[3]

Diverse ways of describing African influence have been devised. The concept of Negro-African culture obviously sets race or racial traits as the common denominator for a culture which is trans-continental and which incorporates the cultures of the Black Americas. Style rather than racial origin is the touchstone for definitions of "Neo-African" cultures. Stylistic characteristics undoubtedly follow the historical movement of the slave ships, but Jahn limits himself to aesthetic criteria, criteria which we have already had the occasion to criticize.

In both cases, laying down a large, vaulting category results from ideological needs, and those who do so usually fail to distinguish between the ideological programmes within some milieux in the Black Americas, and their contexts. The crux of this failure is that which is now familiar to us: we must clearly situate Negro-African or Neo-African cultural doctrines within their actual context, that of an elite who, for reasons of its own, seeks an identity, and in doing so seeks to differentiate itself from another social group, in this case the white majorities in the Americas.

The fact of the matter is that the notion of Africa has frequently, though not always, been an "imaginary concept floating in the void", as

Roger Bastide calls it.[4] If it suffice that a writer express his love for Africa, or claim that African values permeate his work, for us to accept that an influence has occurred, then our task as critics is quite simple: make up a list of authors who have made this claim. If, on the other hand, "influence" is restricted to its narrowest meaning and refers only to an authenticated case of emission and reception (as in the so-called French school of Comparative Literature), then most would have to agree that there is no evidence of direct African influence on the New World up until very recently. The effects upon its oral literature or folklore would be much larger.

Somewhere between these two extremes lies the fertile distinction, the one which not only takes its distance from the impressionism of the first position and insists on the difference between African and Afro-American cultures, but which at the same time acknowledges their mutual relevance. The notion of elite is useful once again at this point.

What circumstances therefore enable us to speak of an African influence on New World literatures? Cultural influence usually follows lines of economic and social domination. The impact of United States literature since the thirties is partly the result of their economic power, a capacity for the diffusion of their culture. The popularity of French in the eighteenth century takes on a new dimension when we recall that France was a demographic giant at the time. Black Africa, needless to say, has not recently exercised this form of domination. African influence came in the back door; it emanated from the oppressed classes of the countries in question, or from the elite speaking in their name.

There were two sources readily available to Afro-American writers, in the largest sense of "American": 1) their own bodies of theory, generated in the New World and in Paris in the twenties and thirties; and 2) the Afro-American cultures in the New World. These latter are no longer "African" in any direct sense, for they represent the results of centuries of separate development and evolution. African culture began altering from the minute the slaves were placed in the holds. And with only some exceptions there has been little contact with Africa since then.[5]

Afro-American "folk" culture is moreover not necessarily identical with the négritude movements, even when the latter claim inspiration from the former. A poem by Langston Hughes or Nicolás Guillén is conceived, created, distributed, and appreciated in ways completely different from those in which the blues or santería are. Expressions of solidarity with, or even skillful use of material from, Afro-American folk cultures should not blind us to the distinction which remains between popular cultures, on the one hand, and self-conscious and elitist literary movements, on the other.

Paradoxically, négritude movements are ultimately the result of a coming to terms with a situation in the New World, in particular with certain moments of nationalism, more than of a direct contact with Africa. The different négritudes reflect the variety of the New World. The literature of four areas which exemplify New World négritude, Cuba, Haiti and the francophone Caribbean islands, Brazil, and the United States, share enough traits, nonetheless, to justify the following generalizations.

There has been no recent, direct influence of oral or tribal African literature upon the New World (as there perhaps has been upon music, for altogether different reasons). Religious customs, music, and folklore carried from Africa have of course taken root in the Americas, but négritude is the ideology of an elite, not the folk.

Folklore studies played a part in the ideological development of négritude. The doctrine that the Black poet is more closely identified with his people than the typical Western poet claims validity from the fact that tribal poets did not express their individual predilections and psychological separation from their audience, as Western bourgeois poets do.

Literary movements (négritude in the Antilles, the Afro-Cuban movements, the Harlem Renaissance) urged the insertion of purported African techniques and themes into the essentially European genres of the New World, but did not alter the elitist Western literary tradition.

This entire process, a complex dialectic in which an ideology eventually expresses itself in literary innovation, was grounded in conditions in the New World.

The first of these points contradicts the manifestoes of the movements themselves. To their adherents, they represented a return to a lost African tradition, a heritage, an affirmation of the African personality, and an assertion of the rights of blacks. Négritude was at given points in time anti-racist, but the other assertions are dubious. There are two different levels upon which they could hold true, the first in history (e.g. Afro-American culture and social traditions may correspond to African ones), the second in literature (the Afro-American tradition corresponds to the African ones). We shall first turn to the cultural and social tradition.

The confusion which reigns in studies of Afro-American cultures is manifold and pervasive. The argument surrounding Black American English, for example, faces familiar partis pris, tangled definitions, and lack of distance from one's own political options.[6] Many linguists are far too anglophilic in their search for the roots of Black English, yet Afro-Americans would themselves take offence at the use of the term "pidgin" to describe the earlier history of their language. Dillard's hypothesis, that most Afro-American dialects are based in a maritime Portuguese pidgin, thus encounters hostility from all sides, for it straddles a number of political positions. There have been numerous accounts of African influence upon Afro-American dialects,[7] but most founder on the same shoals: to what extent is Afro-American non-Western, and what politics are thereby implied? The positions which once justified racism and suppression of Afro-Americans can now further their liberation.

There is no doubt now after Turner's major work on the Gullah dialect, the language spoken by Black Americans isolated on the islands off the South Carolina coast, that it is heavily influenced by African languages. The important question is whether it has much relevance to the understanding of Black English as a whole. Dillard says it does, and has a very persuasive argument. But there is a difference between the manner in which he goes about establishing his proofs, and that which others, for example, Arthur J. Smith, use.[8] The latter holds that there is a mode of language use common to Black Americans. This mode, nommo, a concept extracted from the work of Janheinz Jahn and to which we have already referred on more than one occasion, incarnates the creative power of language, and is used with such generality that it is practically meaningless.

Arguments over Afro-American music, be it jazz, Brazilian popular music, or rhumba share the same fate. The complexities of the music itself, and the conflicting interpretations one can lend to the same acoustical phenomena (the blue note and syncopation are two hotly contested concepts),[9] leave us at the mercy of our preconceptions. Here, too, there is little doubt that Africa had a large influence upon New World music. Ortiz carried these studies beyond mere impressions of Afro-Cuban music.[10] And the fascinating cross-cultural comparisons in Samuel Charter's documentary record in the Folkways Series is, in spite of some appeal to impressionism, persuasive.[11]

But even those who have been ardent defenders of that influence, as the Brazilian critic Renato Almeido, will sometimes back off from sweeping generalizations.[12] Influences on music in the New World are multifold, one revealing example being the "Africanization" of the Amerindian harmonies by black populations in Equador.[13] The recent Africanization of North American popular music is not so much influence as deliberate imitation, and often poorly-informed imitation.

Although Leroi Jones (who now uses his "Afro-name", Imamu Amiri

Baraka), insists upon a basic continuity between jazz and African music, he admits and indeed proclaims the American nature of jazz as rooted in the suffering of Black Americans.[14] From this point of view it is just a step to recognize that jazz is a synthesis of diverse influences, none of which can be discounted: thematic material, in both the musical and literary sense, and instruments from the white world. Jazz, however some critics may want to ascribe it solely to the black community,[15] is not limited to that community anymore. As a market phenomenon, moreover, its audience is certainly restricted in background and financial resource to a certain elite.

But sometimes even the most exhaustive studies of Afro-American cultures contain concealed traps. The debate between Herskovits and Frazier (carried out passim in The Negro in the United States, but in detail in the pages dealing with the family),[16] is relevant here. Herskovitz is agreed to have been the greatest documentator of African survivals in the New World,[17] but there are some eminently disputable implications in his ideas. In order to accept his thesis that matriarchy in the Afro-American family is at least partially due to the survival of the matriarchical tendencies in African culture itself in spite of hundreds of years of separation from that culture and of a radically altered economic structure, we would have to accept that there is a practically racial predisposition in Afro-Americans toward a certain kind of culture, that, in other words, culture is transmitted genetically, not socially.

Frazier does not dispute everything Herskovitz says, and in fact praises his work from time to time, as well as relying on it, as practically everyone must. But he does put his finger on a sensitive spot of the debate over traditional influence. The uproar surrounding Time on the Cross, a "cliometric" study of conditions under slavery, and the diverse political and economic conclusions it would have us draw, is further evidence of the intensity of this debate.[18]

There is probably no purely literary argument over African influence in the New World. Assumptions about history, race, or politics underlie most positions, even of those who attempt, like Janheinz Jahn, a relatively "intrinsic" analysis of the Neo-African work of art. Jahn's eclectic wealth of information is impressive, and he does not hesitate to dip into any field he wants. But he runs the danger, as does any eclectic thinker, of mixing levels and modes of material, of performing an apparent tour de force, but not asking and answering the right questions. His theory of Neo-African culture rests on a synthesis of several classics of African ethnography, but a synthesis of disparate thinkers is not necessarily the correct view of their common subject matter.[19] What, for example, is the exact nature of the "philosophical" categories sketched out by Father Placide Tempels, as contrasted with the myths which Griaule's informant, Ogotemmêli, offers us?[20] And why apply these principles to peoples thousands of miles away? Tempels' work, for one, could certainly be reproached for its idealism. He constructs an ontology which he then attributes to the Bantu peoples as a whole. Ogotemmêli recounted cosmogonic myths which obviously do bear an ontology, but he was an informant, not an ethnologist.[20] Questions like these arise at every turn of Jahn's thought and Tempel's thought.[21]

Jahn's stylistic theory is of particular interest, however, because it does propose the first large-scale theory of Neo-African literature, and because this theory is at least partially intrinsic. His main argument is that a common stylistic impulse shapes the works of what he calls Neo-African culture, and that this style descends directly from that of tribal Africa. In general, African and Neo-African art is supposed to be marked by two traits, the "designation of the image" (a process which determines the "expressive content" of the work, its meaning), and rhythm, especially polymetry. Such an assertion of the functional similarity between tribal African and modern works of African inspiration inevitably fails, for reasons discussed above.

In the first place, they are flawed by vague terminology and by a logic which is not exclusive enough. If, for example, one assumes that the African (and Neo-African) work of art "receives its meaning during its designation" and expresses this meaning "through signs, determinants which are rhythmically arranged and the expressive power of which is intensified by rhythm"[22] there is no way of separating the category in mind from that of all works of all times and places (but especially from European Expressionism). Surely there is a kind of designation present whenever we approach any object we have been informed is a work of art. And although the polymetry of Africa is distinctive,[23] we beg some very large questions when we make rhythm an exclusive property of Africa. This does not mean that those rhythms are not specific, only that their specificity remains a subjective impression. The order of problems such an analysis poses (what rhythms are "African", or better, which can be found in a given African language? how would these rhythms manifest themselves in another language system? what sort of mutual interference do the languages of a bilingual person have on one another, and how is this relevant? etc), is immense. These kinds of questions necessitate a good grounding in linguistics.

In the second place, Jahn and others akin to him overlook another important aspect: sociologically-speaking, tribal African poetry and modern Western literature are disparate phenomena. This is a matter we have already discussed at length.[24]

One must distinguish two kinds of influence, a thorough-going and primary sort, and a secondary sort, wherein writers seek out models and themes from a culture foreign to them. Ezra Pound's use of Chinese poetry, a good example of secondary influence, does not make him Chinese, of course, but it does justify referring to a kind of Chinese influence upon him. One is more often correct speaking of African influence on New World literatures on this secondary level, for there have been some Afro-American writers with a deep knowledge of Africa, for example Langston Hughes.

Now there are strata of African culture in the New World upon which a writer can draw directly. Many of the characteristics of the oral or popular literature of those strata do in fact coincide with or at least parallel oral African literature. They should not be confused with the formal literature, the négritude movements, but should be contrasted and compared with them. These very milieux, not African culture itself, are most directly connected to New World literatures: they were the sources for the innovations of a Nicolás Guillén or a Langston Hughes.

In a sense the task of literary criticism on Afro-American literatures resembles that of ethnographers in the New World in the first half of the century. They were calling attention to the New World situation. At times the information they provided was false, at others frankly racist or paternalistic. What makes them important is that they attributed value to the African heritage. They fueled the Afro-American movements, especially those in Haiti and Cuba. If the relationships are less clear-cut in Brazil and the United States, they were so precisely because of the specific nature of those two countries, of New World situations.

Nina Rodriquez, whose *L'Animisme fétichiste des nègres au Bahia* appeared in 1900, was praised by Euclydes da Cunha in *Os Sertões*, the major work of Brazilian literature at the turn of the century. This latter, though it makes only passing reference to the remnants of African culture in Brazil, and then only in such a way as to make the author's contempt for those milieux perfectly clear, is nevertheless indicative of a number of tendencies of the times. *Os Sertões* begins with a detailed geography;

meteorology, and then ethnography of the backlands which were background to political revolt. Darwin and Taine, whose famous triad of race-milieu-moment is an organizing principle for the work, permeate his thinking. The same influences affected early ethnography, which in its nascent form was frequently little more than intelligence work for colonization, or vindication of imperialism. When ethnography broke away from that role (and there are some who would claim that it never has),[25] it was still coloured by the racialist premises of its origins. To attribute greater religious or vital force to the Other amounts to discounting his Reason, a capacity reserved for oneself. European primitivism functions within the same context: the rejection of Reason does not fundamentally alter the paradigm opposing Reason and Emotion.

In the first part of this century, ethnography was under the influence of such premises. Early studies like L'Animisme fétichiste could hardly escape from the shadow of that evolutionism. Even the latter and superior work of Ramos bears traces of that tendency.[26]

These studies were part of the wave of nationalism and modernism which peaked in the Semana de arte moderna in São Paulo in 1922, but which suffuses Brazilian culture throughout the century. All Brazilian writers were not proponents of the African heritage, to be sure. Euclydes da Cunha had felt no compunction about deprecating the mulatto coast cultures, which he considered incapable of real development.[27] Machado de Assis and the symbolist poet Cruz e Sousa were mulatto, but critics must indulge in elaborate psychoanalysis of their works to detect traces of Afro-American culture.[28] There was also an important abolitionist current in Brazilian literature, but to take these works for expressions of an African heritage would be to repeat the mistake of taking what literature says for what it is. In other words, the worth of the African heritage was never asserted in and of itself until this century.

The Brazilian situations introduces us to the paradox underlying the remainder of the hemisphere's use of Africa--what made African survivances of interest, that which fed the wave of ethnographical studies was that they contributed to the specificity of the Nation. They helped to distinguish Brazil from other nations, or certain Brazilian regions from others (e.g. Bahia in the novels of the nordestinos Jorge Amado or Lins do Rêgo). Afro-Brazilianism was a tributary of the modernist movement itself, for modernism generally isolated and promoted that which was specifically Brazilian, as opposed to European. This is, needless to say, quite the opposite of what happened in the United States, but not so very different from what occurred in Cuba, where the recognition of the African heritage also went hand in hand with nationalism. Of the five major movements of Brazilian modernism, as Coutinho outlines them, at least three have some connection with that heritage, the primitivist movement, the nationalist movement, and the desvairista or "hallucinationist" movement, this last through Mário de Andrade, an ethnologist and poet (who is not to be confused with the Angolan of the same name).[29] While it would be incorrect to exaggerate its influence on modernism as a whole, Afro-Brazilianism existed almost entirely within its orbit.[30] The primitivism of the antropofagia group of Oswald de Andrade and Raul Bopp extended beyond Afro-Americanism to indigenism, but was not that different from the European primitivism of the same time (the Brazilians being merely luckier in having the paraphernalia of their primitivism close at hand). The sequence running from a primitivistic strain of thought, through ethnographic images of those primitive peoples, to an eventual assertion of their values and value, is related to nationalism, and it is not uniquely African or Afro-American.

There was never a discrete Afro-Brazilian movement resembling the cohesive and militant groups of the French-speaking Antilles or of the United States, although there have been a few exceptions, for example, the Teatro experimental do negro, founded by Abdias do Nasçimento.[31] The images of "Mother Africa" present in the poems of Countee Cullen or most francophone négritude writers are missing from Brazilian poetry. In the final analysis, the uniqueness of its racial history distinguished Brazil from other New World cultures. The official ideology of the nation (never to be confused with practice), permits both miscegenation and assimilation, though only at certain levels and provided that the direction of assimilation is towards progressive "whitening". The aims of négritude in Brazil in the face of this fact were two-fold: a revolt against the "Aryanization" of Brazilian society; and an Americanism, "une prise de conscience de leur rôle dans le destin de l'Amérique". The form négritude took in Brazil was that of a weapon intended to "récupérer les forces vives du prolétariat en faveur d'un plus grand Brésil".[32] Not, we might add, in favour of the proletariat itself.

The ethnography of Fernando Ortiz represents the same tendencies in Cuba.[33] While it is legitimate to show some scepticism about the extent Afro-Cubans have been fully integrated into national life, it is nonetheless true that Cuba does offer an example of national ideology which accepts and emphasizes its African elements. Due to a variety of factors, the route to a national culture led through an awareness of the African heritage. Afro-Cubanism was a "way of reintegrating the Negro into national life, and the preliminary step towards forging a national culture".[34] That Afro-Cubans were an intrinsic part of the specificity of the nation, not only its history, its economy, but also its popular culture, was so obvious a fact that white Cubans such as Ballagas and Carpentier were drawn into the vogue of Afro-Cubanism, the conscious use of Afro-Cuban materials and themes, rhythms, and techniques. To be sure, Afro-Cubanism was for many little more than a local variation of the contemporary European avant-garde penchant for primitivism and exoticism of any shape. There is moreover a point at which primitivism, based on the delusion that the Other is somehow closer to Nature and to the Sources, begins to stultify rather than stimulate. This occurs when it has crystallized into ritual or becomes the exclusive property of a clique. But there are also moments when what we now view as primitivism served in the positive evolution of either a poet or a nation's ideology. This is the case of Nicolás Guillén.

Without limiting his poetry to it, Guillén was the best exponent of Afro-Cubanism.[35] His "African" traits came from Cuban sources. Guillén, or Carpentier in Ecué-Yambo-O emphasized Afro-Cuban culture not only for its intrinsic interest and national value, but also for its political importance, its role in class relations. For Afro-Cuban culture was the property of the lower classes, and it was impossible to speak of the latter without speaking of the former. In the Cuban situation, then, a certain kind of primitivism, a certain kind of nationalism, and a certain kind of politics were inextricably linked.

Ortiz, whose Hampa afrocubana: los negros brujos appeared only a few years after L'Animisme fétichiste, cannot be entirely spared the charge of thinking in evolutionist molds.[36] But in the final analysis his work led away from those kinds of conclusions to the later achievements of his career, his musicology and his role as patron of Afro-Cuban studies.

The situation in the French-speaking West Indies and Haiti is ironic, for these literatures of African inspiration in fact had a significant influence upon modern African literature. This turnabout is due to the peculiar nature of the francophone intellectual world, which was such that a young martiniquais like Aimé Césaire could meet the Senegalese Senghor in Paris in the thirties, and establish négritude there around the journals Légitime Défense and L'Etudiant Noir. In these circumstances it may seem as pointless to argue who played the largest part in the development of the ideology, Antilleans or Africans, as it is to debate the related topic of whether négritude is simply a sub-species of surrealism. But négritude and the poetry of Césaire attracted young Africans and Afro-American writers more than the Manifestoes of Breton. In spite of the similarities between surrealism and Senegalese and Caribbean négritude, and the contacts among them,[37] the négritude of Antilles and Haiti was rooted in a nationalist reaction against the overly European culture and tastes of the mulatto elite, and the United States military occupation of 1915. It was not a simple reaction against "Western culture", a reaction already built into Western culture. That négritude was in part a movement towards a culture which was already present, in popular form, on all sides, and not only merely away from decadence. Afro-Americans are indeed in clear majority in Haiti and in the Antilles, and the adoption of European standards there makes much less sense than elsewhere in the New World.

Jean Price-Mars, whose *Ainsi parla l'oncle* was published in 1926, was the Haitian counterpart to Rodriquez and Ortiz.[38] *Vaudou* is the best-known Afro-American phenomenon, and the most mystified one. If Price-Mars was himself not altogether free of that tendency, he marks the turning point between the older, primitivist and the new, more "objective" ways of conceiving Afro-American cultures. His aim was to promote acceptance of them on their own terms, not as adulterated forms of something else, or as a passing intellectual curiosity. He, moreover, first tried to build "a bridge between the two antagonistic classes of Haiti", the mulatto elite and the peasants.[39] The effect of his work was to reveal the culture of the latter to that elite, to make its value glaringly obvious, and to establish that Afro-Haitian culture as the very essence of the national culture. The intellectual elite had to move towards an acceptance of popular culture--an important if inconclusive step.

The Harlem Renaissance in the 1920's had an impact on the literature of the remaining black world too.[40] Composed of such writers as Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and Claude McKay, it sprang up against a background of black nationalism, the thrashing-out of a proper ideological line for the black movement, and a major dislocation of black American life due to urban migration to the North. Frequently of African inspiration, insofar as there were "primitive" motifs, reference to and a "presumed affinity"[41] with Africa, this movement shares with those in Cuba and in Haiti the desire to legitimize and exploit artistically the Black folk culture of the New World. The Harlem Renaissance cannot be connected with a larger nationalism in the same way that movements in Cuba, the Caribbean, and Brazil can. The systematic exclusion of blacks from life in the white United States, precluded the possibility. Indeed, one of the great difficulties of those poets was that they were split between American nationalism, the so-called "American Dream", and an awareness of their debasement in terms of that ideology.

The United States does not offer any single figure of the stature of Price-Mars or Ortiz, rather a plethora of conflicting personalities engaged in debate of the correct course of action for American Blacks to follow. Nevertheless, the writings of Garvey and Du Bois, whose entire gamut of production was dedicated to the promotion of Black culture, roughly correspond to that tendency in the remainder of the New World. And Langston Hughes, among others, corresponds to Guillén in his attempt to capture the folk experience, the forms and spirit of Afro-American nationalism, which habitually seeks to formulate an identity distinct from that of the colonizing forces, then it soon loses its original referents, and floats entirely within the new "magnetic field" of that nationalism. At this point "Africa" becomes a function of the new nationalist ideology.

In the case of the Afro-American intellectuals whose works we have been surveying, Africa represented an Other whose presence was vitally necessary to the dialectic of their thought. We could even say that, within this elite, "Africa" was the motor of Afro-American culture, for it posed an antithesis previously lacking. It would be incorrect to confuse this role with influence. Or to overlook the elitist context of this entire process.

culture.[42] We are thus obliged to speak metaphorically when we refer to the black American nation at the base of this movement. That nation had not assumed a political form.

In a sense, however, the Renaissance of the twenties was speaking to and out of the experience of a black American nation, the same nation to whom Marcus Garvey was arguing the creation of an independent state. The ideological role of the concept of Africa is evident when we realize that although many were moved by Garvey's images, few took the notion of actually returning to Africa seriously.[43] Africa served as an ideological weapon in a struggle in and of the New World.

Now in each above case a peculiar paradox is present. We must discredit claims of direct literary influence of Africa, but the works do make such claims. At the same time, they were plausible literary experiences and had influence throughout the world.

There are of course numerous examples of African influence on the New World. Ethnography brought forth eloquent proof of this. But those influences did not result in a linear transmission of one set of values into another context.

These New World ideologies set, rather, within a complex matrix. A racist stereotype has modulated into racialist primitivism, the negative values of the racism schema having metamorphosed into the positive ones of the primitivist schema. Ethnography at first reflects and then slowly alters this image of the Other, or of the other system of values one wants as one's own. If this all occurs within a larger context of nascent

FOOTNOTES: AFRICA AND THE NEW WORLD

1 Chapter Four.

2 Lilyan Kesteloot, Anthologie négro-africaine. Paris, 1967.
Janheinz Jahn, Muntu. New York, 1961.

3 The plural becomes necessary due to the variety of approaches to the topic: René Depestre, "Les Métamorphoses de la négritude en Amérique", Présence Africaine, 75 (3e 1970), pp. 19-33. Roger Bastide, "Variations sur la négritude", Présence Africaine, 36 (1er 1961), pp. 7-77.

4 Roger Bastide, African Civilizations in the New World. Trans. Peter Green, New York, 1971.

5 Bastide, ibid., is quite strong on this point.

6 J.L. Dillard, Black English. New York, 1972, especially Chapter 1, "Black English and the Academic Establishment"; William A. Stewart, "Socio-Political Issues in the Linguistic Treatment of Negro Dialect"., Report of the 20th Roundtable. Georgetown, 1970.

7 In particular Ian Hancock, "West Africa and the Atlantic Creoles",

in John Spencer (ed.), The English Language in West Africa. London, 1971; Lorenzo Turner, Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect. Chicago, 1949.

8 Arthur J. Smith, "Socio-historical Perspectives of Black Oratory", in Language, Communication and Rhetoric in Black America. New York, 1972, pp. 295-305.

9 Alan P. Merriam, "African Music", in William R. Bascom and Melville J. Herskovits (eds.), Continuity and Change in African Culture. Chicago, 1959, pp. 49-86.

10 Fernando Ortiz, La Africanía de la música folklórica de Cuba. La Habana, 1950.

11 "Roots of Black Music in America", Folkways Records, FA 2694, New York, 1972.

12 "L'Influence de la musique africaine au Brésil", in IFAN Bulletin, Série B, 32 (1970), pp. 599-604.

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14 Leroi Jones, Blues People. New York, 1963.

15 Frank Korsky, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in*

16 Franklin E. Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*. New York, 1957, p. 4.

17 Melville J. Herskovitz, *The Myth of the Negro Past*. New York, 1946; *The New World Negro*. Bloomington, 1966.

18 Thomas L. Haskell, "The True and Tragical History of *Time on the Cross*", *New York Review of Books*, XXII, 13 (October 2 1975), pp. 33-9.

19 Janheinz Jahn, Muntu. New York, 1961; *Neo-African Literature: A History of Black Writings*. New York, 1968.

20 Marcel Griaule, *Dieu d'eau*. Paris, 1966. Father Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*. Paris, 1956.

21 L.V. Thomas, "Les Constantes de la culture nègre, ou réflexions à propos du livre de Janheinz Jahn, *Muntu*". *IFAN Bulletin*, Série B, No. 26-7, 1964-5, pp. 258-71.

22 Jahn, *Muntu*. p. 169.

23 Richard A. Waterman, "African Influences on the Music of the Americas",

in: *Acculturation in the Americas*, *Proceedings of the XXIX International Congrès of Americanists*, *II*, Chicago, 1952, p. 212.

[24] In our Chapter Five,"Tradition and Modernity".

[25] Jean Copans, *Anthropologie et impérialisme*. Paris, 1974.

[26] Artur Ramos, *O Negro brasileiro*. Rio, 1934; *O folclore negro do Brasil*, Rio, 1935; *As culturas negras no novo mundo*. Rio, 1937.

[27] Euclydes da Cunha, *Os Sertões*. Lisboa, Colecção livros do Brasil, n.d., pp. 86-9.

[28] Richard Preto-Rodas, *Negritude as a Theme in the Poetry of the Portuguese-Speaking World*, University of Florida, 1970, p. 17.

[29] Afrânio Coutinho, *An Introduction to Literature in Brazil*. New York, 1969, pp. 210-25.

[30] Richard Preto-Rodas, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-3.

[31] Gregory Rabassa, "Negro Themes and Characters in Brazilian Literature", *African Forum*, II, 4 (1967), p. 34. Also: Roger Bastide, *A poesie afro-brasileira*. Sao Paulo, 1943; Gregory Rabassa,

The Negro in Brazilian Fiction. New York, 1954.

[32] Roger Bastide, "Variations sur la négritude", *Présence Africaine*, 36 (1er 1961), pp. 13-4.

[33] Fernando Ortiz, *Hampa afro-cubana: los negros brujos*. Madrid, 1906; *Hampa afro-cubana: los negros eclavos*. Madrid, 1916; *Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba*. La Habana, 1951.

[34] Jean Franco, *The Modern Culture of Latin America*. Middlesex, 1970, p. 137.

[35] Robert Marquez and David Arthur McMurray, *Man-making Words*. Massachusetts, 1972, p. xiii.

[36] Roger Bastide, "Price-Mars et le Vaudou haitien", *Présence Africaine*, 71 (3e 1969), pp. 19-24.

[37] Lilyan Kesteloot, *Les Ecrivains noirs*. Bruxelles, 1963, pp. 97-9.

[38] Jean Price-Mars, *Ainsi parla l'Oncle*. Compiègne (France): Imprimerie de Compiègne, 1928.

[39] Bastide, "Price-Mars et le Vaudou haitien", *op. cit.*, p. 20.

[40] Gerald Moore, "Poetry in the Harlem Renaissance", in C.W.E. Bigsby (ed.), *The Black Writer*. Deland, Florida, 1969, p. 68.

[41] D.T. Turner, *In a Minor Chord: Three Afro-American Writers and their Search for Identity*. Southern Illinois, 1971, p. 61.

[42] T.B. O'Daniels, *Langston Hughes, Black Genius*. New York, 1971, pp. 183-210.

[43] Jean Wagner, *Les Poètes nègres aux Etats-Unis*. Paris, 1963, p. 346, pp. 169-77.

CHAPTER EIGHT: RHETORIC AND REVOLUTION

Although some dispute Fanon's direct relevance to Black African literature--he was after all from the Caribbean and made his name as spokesman for the Algerian revolution--it is impossible to treat the subject in depth without him. Along with NKrumah, Touré, Lumumba and Amilcar Cabral, all of whom were actual political leaders, Fanon is a champion of African revolutionary tradition.

Prophecized by Sartre in "Orphée noir", Fanon's attack upon Senghor and other proponents of African cultural unity[1] makes him relevant to any discussion of African literature, although his theories bear "extra-literary" concerns. His political doctrines are, inversely, a product of "literary" proclivities. A flair for rhetoric shapes his gospel. His politics are aesthetically interesting.

Such an assertion will offend many who would not have an activist besmirched with aestheticism. Fanon was in fact a militant, and himself criticised the word-play which we shall be accusing him of. This did not prevent him from slipping into it.

At least one critic has found interesting parallels between Rimbaud, Gênet, and Fanon, all three "prophets of doom".[2] Simone de Beauvoir recounts that Fanon, irritated with Sartre's insufficient concern for the problems of Algerian independence, once insisted that the latter refuse to write another word until the French withdrew from their colony.[3] He was convinced that Sartre's sudden declaration and silence would shake public opinion and hasten the end of the war. The incident is more than passingly anecdotal. It displays Fanon's faith in the power of language. As Gendzièr said:

> There was in Fanon a sensitivity to language and a terrifying love for the Word that sometimes seemed to eclipse the action these words were designed to provoke. There was in Fanon a man who knew the "probing, unsettling, maddening and finally hopeful healing effect of words". Whether or not Fanon experienced the healing effect of his own words is doubtful. But that he derived a sensual joy from their manipulation is an open secret.[4]

None of these impressionistic comments proves that Fanon's theories are marred with inflated rhetoric. But they suggest the point at which Fanon's ideals stray from reality, at which his descriptions become prescriptions.

The décalage between discours and history shows up in stylistic analysis.

> The narrative drives forward on the motor of the present tense, but here his sense of historical sequence loses itself in an

> elliptical oscillation between past and present, present and future, future and past. Once again "is" and "ought", the actual and the ideal are subsumed in a single categorical affirmation. Socialist revolutions for which there is neither model nor precedent walk Fanon's pages with as much assurance as instances of degeneration whose actual sources are easy to guess. The Algerian revolution is implicitly treated as a model for all of Africa; a set of unity ideals and categories is imposed on a continent outstanding for its size and diversity. 5

Caute's criticism measures Les Damnés de la terre against "reality".[6] Fanon errs in his sense precisely because his discourse has a set of internalized rules, a style, which necessarily carries it in directions not necessarily those in which moves history.

Fanon rejected the manicheism of both Senghor and the colonial "world-view", and refused to remain within either. His texts are nonetheless products of manicheism, as is a certain African revolutionary tradition. The point at which these "revolutionary" doctrines crystallize into ideology is the point at which they become or remain the thing of an elite, whose separate development condemns them to "partiality". That Fanon was attacking elitism himself does not in the least spare him from elitism.

History, the discours, is narrative, and like all narrative derives from a set of structural possibilities. Cultural historians have their own particular narrative rules, but those which inform African history are not all that different from Western ones: History is linear, and the subject of History, Africa or the African people, moves through time under diverse influences. Organic metaphor predominates. Civilizations reach maturity, blossom, and wither away. Peoples flower, or, having lain dormant, resuscitate.

Such a concept of History is quite different from that held in traditional, tribal Africa, at least as L.V. Thomas has described it.[7] Unlike the narrative history of the West, traditional African history was mythical and explanatory, etiological ("histoire événementielle" vs "histoire mythique à présentation explicative"). All history is in a sense etiological, but in mythic history the link between cause and effect "cuts across" numerous transformational nodes obligatory in narrative history. Time is flat, more accessible: it is the grand temps of which Thomas speaks, not the distant sequence which can only be approached at a last and narrow point of entry into the present. The great organizing systems of African tribal cultures are unlike those of the West.

According to Thomas, the transition from a non-linear to a linear conception of history is still in progress, and many hybrid varieties are coming forth.

> Sur le plan mythologique l'Afrique moderne pourrait se caractériser par quatre traits fondamentaux: perte de vitesse des mythes classiques et du grand temps autour duquel ils se structurent; apparition de mythes conceptuels et images aux dépens du mythe-récit; désacralisation du mythe au profit de la visée pragmatique souvent inséparable du nationalisme militant, ce qui provoque une rupture entre le mythe et le rite qui l'exprime; enfin, glissement du mythe à la légende et surtout à l'idéologie. 8

Thomas' "scientific historians" (Niane, Ki-zerbo, Bâ) are often more ideological than he states.[9] But his examples of the "personality" myths (Lumumba, N'Krumah, Touré), and "conceptual" myths (négritude--

"dont sa seule vérité réside dans son efficacité"), which are taking the place of "classical" tribal myths, are much to the point. Militant nationalism, pan-Africanism, and revolutionary ideologies of one kind or another fill in the breach left by the disintegration of the old myths.

Some would have it that the gap between the elite, who has articulated these myths, and the African peasantry, is due to a time lag, that the masses will eventually "catch up" with its elite. The peasantry is presumed still close to tradition, and insufficiently modernized to grasp complex myths or more than the most rudimentary forms of négritude. Not only is this attitude paternalistic but the elite thus sets itself and its trajectory through history as model for an entire people. Even "progressive" thinkers appear unaware of the contingent and arbitrary nature of their models of revolutionary change. Their conceptions of nation and revolution are marked by numerous ossified rhetorical figures and dead metaphors. A political vanguard is also an elite. The measure of its worth is precisely its long term ability to inaugurate a new "classical" period, a new ideological hegemony, and then to do away with itself. Any indication that its creed is only one among other myth-substitutes amounts to condemnation.

The notion of nation is a thorny one in Africa, and with reason. Africa was deliberately balkanized by the colonial powers, and this process was consummated in the late fifties when, one after another, a welter of independent states came into being. There are few better examples of the old dictum "divide and conquer". Nations developed out of very specific historical circumstances, and are a "European" form of organization. They were an alien form within Africa, formerly organized along tribal or imperial lines. The nations which Europe landed on Africa severed lines of communication among ethnic and language groups, and imposed unity upon agglomerations whose internal logic was that of conflict and contradiction. The Western powers thereby assured the long term weakness of the new states.

Confronted with this confusion, intellectuals and some political leaders have sought out a larger unity. Three grounds are usually given for it: culture, race, politics. For Aimé Césaire, colonialism forged the unity of Africa (and, he would add, the Antilles).[10] For others, such as Cheikh Anta Diop, Senghor, the underlying unity of Africa is its common precolonial culture. For yet others, race, distributed in almost the same pattern as either colonialism or common cultural practices, binds Africans together.

> The profound, multi-dimensional contrast between these two groups, Negro-African and European has had a powerful effect on the conception of Negro-African unity. In view of the proposed differences that separate all Africans from all Europeans, the former could indeed be represented as a group possessing certain common objective characteristics--race being the most obvious, and not the least important, of these. Consequently, nationalist history is essentially the history of a racial group, the African Negro. 11

Race was, of course, not in the least important in traditional African thought, where tribe served as focus. But race, a key element in the European discourse on Africa, was perforce incorporated into modern

African ideology--after the requisite change of "valences", the inversion of values. The "profound differences" which separate "all Africans and all Europeans" override any similarities between them and, as we have seen, divert attention from differences within Africa.

The preoccupation with history runs deeper. There is a practically Jungian flavour to some declarations of African historians, who it is also true have a vested interest in the merits of history.

> De même, les collectivités et les peuples sont le fruit de leur histoire. L'histoire est la mémoire des nations. C'est pourquoi il est de la plus haute importance pour la personnalité d'un peuple de cultiver cette mémoire collective ou, au contraire, d'en laisser oblitérer les trésors. Ainsi, le fait de reprendre conscience de son histoire est un signe de renaissance pour un peuple.[12]

Collective "amnesia" induces disintegration; the psychology of individuals is equated with the psychology of nations; possessing the past is the key to possessing the future. Psychological and historical discourse are fused.

The history of Africa was thus reconstituted to contrast with Europe.

> C'est ainsi que M. Sékou Touré, dans un discours prononcé peu de temps après l'indépendance de la Guinée, opposait la faiblesse de la France capétienne à la vigeur des grands Empires soudanais qui étaient contemporains de cette France capétienne. C'est ainsi que le Dr. Nkwamé N'Krumah opposait une Angleterre non encore constituée en tant que nation, donc très faible, à l'Empire du Ghana qui était fort brillant et agissait comme centre de ralliement pour certains érudits de tradition musulmane.[13]

In general, African historiography reverses Western versions at three points: the origin of civilization (claimed to have occured in Africa), the sudden decline of the great Empires (attributed to the slave trade), and the submission of Africa to colonialism.[14] Explanations of the latter run from the effects of the slave trade--over 100,000,000 inhabitants were lost over a few centuries--to the rise of capitalism and its superior technical force. A fourth moment is of obvious concern, that of decolonization, of history in its recent making. All schools of African history are in agreement over a single point: Africa was a victim of colonialism. The mechanics of independence and the attitudes adopted towards the nature of decolonization, the nation, and the relation of classes within the nation are the touchstones of contemporary African ideology.

The assertion, common to all colonizing peoples, that those who are subjugated are by nature inferior is often internalized by the latter themselves. Indeed, colonizers are capable of highly articulated philosophies justifying their prejudices (what else was primitivist ethnology in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?). O. Mannoni's Psychologie de la colonisation (translated as Prospero and Caliban, and included in the reading material of American Peace Corps members during the mid-sixties), asserted that the Malagasy people were psychologically destined for colonization, for their cultures had prepared them to be passive and subservient.[15] We are all familiar with such bigotry, and it is far from absent within Africa itself. The Kpellè of central Liberia, for example, are derogatively called "paysahs" by their neighbours, and looked down upon as particularly slow and submissive to the "kwi"--Westerners or the "westernized". But their disorganization and servility are due to the fact that the central government, too frequently confronted in the thirties with hinterland revolts, elected, like Haussmann, to construct the main highway through the heart of Kpelleland, brusquely wrenching them into a money economy, into exploitation. They bore the brunt of government oppression, and yet were scorned by surrounding tribes. That the government is nominally black adds an edge of paradox.

Albert Memmi has most clearly countered such confusion of cause and effect.

> Il existe, assurément--à un point de son évolution--une certaine adhésion du colonisé à la colonisation. Mais cette adhésion est le résultat de la colonisation et non sa cause; elle naît après et non avant l'occupation coloniale.[16]

Colonialism is reversible. What is at stake is rather the means for and meaning of decolonization.

The standard model for decolonization is triadic, be it that of Fanon, of N'Sougan, of Mario de Andrade, of that of Georges Balandier:

> Premier moment, la reconnaissance du fait colonial, son interprétation et son acceptation; le fait colonial est subi, il doit être traité pour trouver tant bien que mal sa place. Deuxième moment, la réaction à la domination coloniale. Troisième moment, la revendication de l'indépendence et, avec cette étape, le passage du mythe à l'idéologie politique, puis à la doctrine politique.[17]

The French critic Genette has spoken of the intellectual proclivity for three-part models,[18] and we are within our rights to wonder why this mould is so frequently borrowed.

There are moreover slight differences in detail among the models of decolonization: each straddles the process in a particular way. For Ferdinand N'Sougan, the three phases are the colonial one, that of independence, and the post-colonial one.[19] Mario de Andrade arranges the sequence somewhat differently in his description of Portuguese African poetry: the refusal of assimilation (négritude) is followed by a deepening of particularization of national experience, which in turn leads to militant or political poetry.[20] Fanon recognizes a first moment, that in which the colonized intellectual proves he has mastered the master's culture, a second in which he seeks out his roots, and a third, a period of combat or militant poetry.[21] The emphasis placed on varying aspects of decolonization reveals each author's political leanings. For example, in N'Sougan's scenario the major process of contemporary period history is already complete; "post-colonial" literatures may be accredited one by one and admitted into the world literary system.[22] His chief criterium is the legal existence of nations, and the effect this has upon official national artists.

De Andrade's three "moments" could be intercalated into Fanon's last two, for once the African artist has understood the need for independence, it is inevitable that he move towards a popular poetry and become "le porte-parole d'une nouvelle réalité en actes".[23] And in this both de Andrade and Fanon are related to Sartre's triptych, itself dialectic: négritude is a response, the antithesis, to European racism, but it is destined to "pass" (Aufheben) into allegiance to the general and objective (as opposed to specific and subjective) concept of the international proletariat, as it in fact did in the case of some writers from the West Indies, Roumain, Depestre. As such, and although both Fanon and de Andrade are careful to situate the process they are referring to within the ideological struggles of an elite,[24] they commit the same error as Sartre in 1947, error which he corrected in his more subtle 1961 "La Pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba".[25] As Sartre elaborated so exhaustively in _Critique de la raison dialectique_, this error consists in not admitting the necessary number of dialectical mediations between concepts and acts.[26] One form of this mistake is the familiar habit of isolating a moment in the cultural life of a narrow social caste and extrapolating it to that of an entire society. Both perspectives point to the same critical cul-de-sac: de Andrade's and Fanon's prescriptions are unable to account for the complexities of cultural evolution. Leninists both of them (although de Andrade has apparently resigned from the MPLA he helped to found, and Fanon is often labelled Bakuninist--but only insofar as he also took the _lumpen_, and not the industrial proletariat, as the motor of the revolution), both commit a common Leninist blunder. Both confound party history with mass history,[27] since each bases his schema of cultural growth upon unfolding attitudes within a cultural and/or political vanguard. This is particularly the case for de Andrade, for he, Agostinho Neto, who is at this writing still head of the MPLA, and many other Angolan and Mozambican poets were also political militants within the vanguard. Their positions were thus contingent upon strategy, and by no means congruent with the larger evolution of the masses. Inversely, the inability to remain as vanguard in creative tension with the masses annuls the vanguard's right to existence.

It is easy to understand why an elite deliberately confuses party history and mass history: doing so assures its continued domination, a procedure similar to other instances of ascendency exercised by other classes. And herein lies one of Fanon's ties to Sorel. Although both are noted for their appreciation of, and even awe before violence, their deepest affinity resides in their role as myth-makers, makers of figments intended to move the masses but which actually manipulate them. It is hard to call either Sorel or Fanon cool and calculating. But as political mythmakers, and as chroniclers and critics of the myth-making of others, they founded their influence upon the very cleft Fanon, for one, denounced: the split between an elite and the masses, between those who create and those who "consume" ideology.

Fanon and his school are thus ideological in the sense of both Balandier and Thomas. The drift from classical myths to overt ideology covers not only conceptual myths such as négritude, clearly tool and product of an elite, but also revolutionary ideologies, as long as the vanguard exists. A political vanguard is not only a weapon in the class struggle, but an effect of it, yet another instance of hierarchy and stratification. These tautologies, in themselves, neither justify nor condemn the existence of a vanguard, and certainly do not legitimate its rejection. Rather, they confirm great practical difficulties which only self-consciousness can surmount.[28]

Quoting Malinowsky, Balandier refers to the "parenté interne" between "classical myth", which to some extent did justify privilege and power within tribal society, and political ideology.[29] In doing so he takes a poke at those who have idealized the harmony of precolonial Africa. His three-part model of decolonization is intended to account for society as a whole, hence his references to messianic religions, popular revolts and movements like the Mau-Mau, and to the incidence of ideologies like négritude upon the masses. What he calls the "sterilization" of these political reactions to colonialism has its counterpart in the relegation of all phenomena to either the traditional or the modern sector, a habit which we remarked upon above.[30] Its effect is also inevitably to diffuse the import of anti-colonial or anti-imperialist reactions.

> On verra d'ailleurs que, sur l'expérience de l'Afrique,des mouvements de transformation sociale *d'allure traditionnelle* (les mouvements religieux de protestation qui prennent des formes prophétiques, les mouvements théocratiques de réorganisation du pouvoir local comme ceux des confréries musulmanes d'Afrique de l'Ouest--Mourides du Sénégal, "sultanats" du Nigeria--ou le mahdismes soudanais, l'évolution de certaines monarchies centralisées de l'Afrique animiste comme les Etats Wolof ou dahoméens, etc.) sont des réponses aux problèmes de l'intégration dans le système mondial naissant c'est-à-dire en définitive des mouvements d'adaptation, d'ajustment à la condition de périphérie---- Ces formes pseudo-traditionnelles cachent un contenu "moderne", bien que pauvres; elles constituent un moyen de survie dans les conditions dramatiques de la marginalité. 31

Of course it logically follows that nationalism too is a means of survival, a reaction to marginalization, and there is at once no doubt at this late date that Africa will pass through a prolonged period of petty nationalism, and that, since history allows no "what-if's", that this balkanization was the only possible response to Western imperialism. But the ideological process by which Nation became the alternative to Colony is, apart from the concrete political and economic machinations which enforced it, interesting to those who regret that the once progressive cry for nationhood has become an instrument in the hands of a comprador elite. For nations in Africa do not in this sense differ substantially from nations in the West: they attempt to assure an exclusivity of political and economic power to a certain group.

Sartre had a key influence on Fanon, but "Orphée noir" was of particular importance.[32] Fanon was later to take his distance from Sartre, to suggest that the latter, as white Frenchman, was incapable of understanding the existential experience of a black man: "Jean-Paul Sartre has forgotten that the Negro suffers in his skin differently than the white man".[33] But Sartre's 1948 essay forced him into reflection about négritude and his historically transitory role. Fanon, as Sartre, defended the psychological necessity of négritude, a necessity about which Sartre could only theorize. Like Sartre, he was convinced that négritude was "self-destructing".

> Ainsi la négritude est pour se détruire, elle est passage et non aboutissement, moyen et non fin dernière. Dans le moment que les Orphées noirs embrassent le plus étroitement cette Eurydice, ils sentent qu'elle s'évanouit entre leurs bras.[34]

For the Fanon of Les Damnés de la terre (a title taken from "L'Internationale"), the beauty of that Eurydice had already vanished, though its memory was close in time and in his personal history. He had an excellent grasp of négritude, of its internal logic. He knew, for example, that its internal structure was bipolar.

> Dans l'ensemble, les chantres de la négritude opposeront la vieille Europe à la jeune Afrique, la raison ennuyeuse à la poésie, la logique oppressive à la piaffante nature, d'un côté raideur, cérémonie, protocole, scepticisme,de l'autre, ingénuité, pétulance, liberté, pourquoi pas luxuriance. Mais aussi irresponsabilité. [35]

The last phrase makes it clear that Fanon saw both the pitfalls of such polarity, and that the chain of oppositions originated in the European code, in the European antynomy of black and white.

> Il est bien vrai que les grands responsables de cette racialisation de la pensée, ou du moins des démarches de la pensée, sont et demeurent les Européens qui n'ont pas cessé d'opposer la culture blanche aux autres incultures... Le concept de négritude par exemple était l'anti-thèse affective sinon logique de cette insulte que l'homme blanc faisait à l'humanité. A l'affirmation inconditionnelle de la culture européenne a succédé l'affirmation inconditionnelle de la culture africaine. [36]

It actually was "logical". "Africa" does not exist, and the creation of a black culture which is a "logical imperative" of the series of oppositions contained within both the colonizing culture of Europe and négritude is destined to absurdity. Cultures cannot be constructed on thin air; they are the result of concrete conditions. "La culture négro-africaine, c'est autour de la lutte des peuples qu'elle se densifie, et non autour des chants, des poèmes ou du folklore".[37]

They are thus two premises underlying Fanon's critique of négritude, the first that culture is a product of material life, and the second that the only foyer for material life is that of the nation. The first premise is recognizably marxist: the infrastructure determines the superstructure; ideas are a reflection of the real world; culture is a matter of class. The second is the particular variation which Fanon worked upon Marxism, and that which constitutes his originality and his popularity in recent years.

> La nation n'est pas seulement condition de la culture, de son effervescence, de son renouvellement continué, de son approfondissement. Elle est aussi une exigence. C'est d'abord le combat pour l'existence nationale qui débloque la culture, lui ouvre les portes de la création.[38]

Nations and national cultures were, to Fanon, the only logical conclusion to anti-colonial struggle.

In part this was because political practice was based upon feasible national units, rather than ideal continental visions. Colonization was carried out on a continental, a global, scale, but decolonization went by mini-state. The concepts of Nation and Colony were thus indissolubly linked. One became the positive and the other the negative same of the same reality.

$$\frac{\text{colony}}{\text{non-colony}} = \frac{\text{non-nation}}{\text{nation}}$$

But there is no intrinsic reason to suppose that what is un-colonial is necessarily national, especially since the administration and geographical outlines of the colonies which became nations were created by colonial authorities.

Reification is the act of confusing prescription with description, of taking one's descriptive categories for the "real thing". Fanon ends up speaking, as did many African leaders, of "re-establishing the national sovereignty" of African colonies (rétablir la souveraineté de la nation).[39] But those nations had never existed.

Now both "nation" and "colony" are part of the language, and conform to a certain reality. Nations exist in the minds of men, and it is men with nations in their minds who engage in politics and write literature. Moreover, in spite of its polarity and simplicity, the concept of Nation is semantically rich. Nations are assumed to share characteristics with living and growing things. Fanon speaks of "une nation née" (p. 174), of "la maturation de la conscience nationale" (p. 172), of "le rétablissement de la nation qui donne vie, au sens le plus biologique du terme" (p. 173). His triadic model for the development of Third World cultures is organic insofar as it culminates in the mature blossoming of a popular, national culture. And this model of national development is no doubt coloured by Fanon's psychological training, as is much of his thought.

One of the tricks of thought which psychology has not yet eliminated from its conceptual repertoire is precisely this tendency to fall back on organic or biological terms. There is no reason why either individual psychological or national development should share more than a passing similarity with that of a flower. There is also, of course, no reason not to make the comparison; in fact this is one of the faculties of language which lends itself to poetry. But regular recourse to what are essentially dead metaphors, those of organic development, is inevitably ideological and redundant.

Fanon is not the only writer to speak of the birth of nations, of the maturity of peoples, or to assume that there is a collective mental life which can be examined psychologically. Most nationalist ideologies trade in such facile rhetoric: the German nationalist "revival" in the 18th century (as some have called it, though, once again, that nation never existed previous to its "revival"), and the two sorts of Canadian nationalism, are two immediate examples. Fanon's own reiteration of these analogies is not that unusual.

Not having a nation leads to: "... des mutilations psycho-affectives extrèmement graves.Des gens sans rivage, sans limite, sans couleur, des apatrides, des non-enracinés, des anges".[40] They have no Roots. Those without nationality, or sooner, without a nationalism, are psychological misfits:

> Semblable aux enfants adoptifs, qui ne cessent leurs investigations du nouveau cadre familial que dans le moment oũ se critallise dans leur psychicisme un noyau sécurisant minimum, l'intellectuel colonisé va tenter de faire sienne la culture européenne. 41

The irony is that Fanon's very aim was to call attention to oversimplification. "La culture fuit éminemment toute simplification".[42] He was aware of the role reification plays in ideology.

> Le plus souvent, ne voulant ou ne pouvant pas choisir, ces intellectuels ramassent toutes les déterminations historiques qui les ont conditionnés et se placent radicalement dans une "perspective universelle".43

That universal perspective is Senghor's "Civilisation de l'universel" where the world's cultures fuse in airy abstraction.

A sterile culture clings to one image of its past, and rejects the relativity of that vision of the past. As Fanon says,

> Il n'est pas utopique de supposer que dans une cinquantaine d'années la catégorie jazz-cri hoqueté d'un pauvre nègre maudit sera défendue par les seuls blancs, fidèles à l'image stoppée d'un type de rapports, d'une forme de la négritude. 44

To a certain extent, African nationalism, even that considered revolutionary, is a form of stopped or frozen image.

The literary repercussions of models of decolonization are numerous. Literature is said to follow or reflect the historical movements presupposed in nationalist ideologies, to be based in nations, and to derive their legitimacy from a national culture. Once, however, the nation has been forged, numerous problems of typology remain.

Mario de Andrade's short introduction to La Poésie africaine d'expression portugaise is, for example, an application of the triadic model of decolonization. Although the literature of Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique has lagged behind other African literatures, because, to be sure, decolonization of these territories has taken more time, they nonetheless correspond to the general pattern. Lusophone African literature had its négritude period. The difference between lusophone and other African literatures, frequently ascribed to the bent of the colonial masters for miscegenation, or to the ferocity with which they clung to their colonies, is not of kind but of degree. The colonial ideology was in fact more directed towards assimilation than elsewhere, whatever the actual practice:

> Ah vem unir teus lábios ondo provo tão bem
> O gôsto de cereja e da castanha quente
> Aos meus lábios que sabem perturbadoramente
> A goiba e a dedém. 45

Movements like négritude sprang up insisting upon a *retour aux sources* and, eventually, political independence. *O Associação regional dos naturais de Angola* and the group "Vamos descobrir Angola" spread after World War II. And the MPLA, the *Movimento popular de libertação de Angola*, followed on their heels. The majority of Angolan poets have spent their lives in exile, in prison or in the maquis, and they have been, at the same time, the political leaders of the liberation movements, e.g. Agostinho Neto, de Andrade himself of the MPLA, or M.G. Valente of FRELIMO in Mozambique. There is little wonder that their literature is *engagée* in these circumstances. The only internationally-known work of Angolan literature, *A Verdadeira vida de Domingos Santos* is a novelization of the life of an early hero of the Angolan liberation movement, now a mythic figure of ideology.[46]

De Andrade's perspective is not simply African, but revolutionary. He describes an early poet, Rui de Noronha, as "loin de poser les bases d'une complète identification avec son peuple". The new nation is the necessary form or container of this identification ("Pour extirper l'assimilation, il faut pouvoir se *re-connaître* dans les éléments d'une culture enracinée dans le sol national").[47] Those who do not do so, whose culture remains marked by European national cultures, are considered reactionary.

> Passons sur deux tendances mineures représentées par les poètes Geraldo Bessa Victor et Mario Antonio qui, prenant délibérément parti contre les aspirations profondes du peuple angolais à l'indépendence, méritent les prix littéraires qui leur sont décernés par les institutions coloniales. L'un est victime de l'auto-exotisme, mode d'appréhension de la culture africaine avec les yeux du vieux poète-colon, et l'autre subit une crise intimiste. 48

The first mode, exemplified by the poem cited above beginning "Ah vem unir teus lábios", is a variation on the Europe/Africa opposition, a particularly sprightly terminological invention; the second refers to a refusal to respond to revolutionary codes, to discuss colonialism.

Finally, the fundamental criterium, basis both of value judgements and periodizations, is that of identification with the masses.

> La tendance qui, à notre sens, marque la phase actuelle de la poésie africaine d'expression portugaise se ramène à l'exhaltation de l'émergence de ce nouveau phénomène constitué par la reprise de s'initiative populaire. Il s'agit encore une fois d'identifier avec le contenu populaire de la lutte de libération nationale. D'où le caractère militant revêtu par cette production poétique contemporaine. 49

In the final analysis, the pole elite/masses is the basis of de Andrade's ideology. Authentic nations are a function not just of territorial independence, but of the values implied by that polarity.

The very question of revolutionary nationalism leads to other themes, in particular, the forms engagement must take in developing societies. There are affinities and parallels between the engagement for which Sartre is the best-known Western proponent, and that proper to African writers.

In both there is an active involvement with the present, with social issues and social change. But for African writers, and others from societies which Césaire criticized as "mozaic", there is a more fundamental decision: which cultural group ought one become a spokesman for. The answer is clear in revolutionary ideology: the "popular" masses. Thus, for de Andrade,

> ... les écrivains de la nouvelle génération doivent se remettre à l'école africaine pour refléter dans leurs oeuvres le devenir de la nation et répondre à l'appel de leur public. 50

Let us note in passing the ubiquitous "re"- here and above. African writers cannot put themselves back under African tutelage any more than Ghana can be reborn. De Andrade does not mean, however, that Africans were torn from their "natural" culture by colonialism and ought to return to that culture, essentially unchanged. L'école africaine for a materialist is not the same defended by Senghor, but the daily life of a people presumed in political revolt. The new principles of African identity are present, from this point of view, in the praxis of national liberation. And this is very close to Fanon.

Such notions were already implied in the négritude of Césaire or David Diop, and of those in their wake.[51] Poetry, expression of the "content of national liberation", is taken as vehicule of revolution, or, in an altered form of the same paradigm, a vehicule of protest. But there is a profound difference between "revolutionary" nationalism and protest literature.

It is perfectly accurate to describe the journalism of José de Fontes as "early Angolan protest". Or to isolate the posture of protest in the novels of Achebe.[52] But "protest" does not have the same premises as revolutionary ideology. There is an active tradition of protest against the governments in place after independence, against corruption, graft or pretentiousness (e.g. the plays of Soyinka, or the "prophetic" novel by Achebe, *A Man of the People*).[53] The support by two of Nigeria's best writers, Achebe and Okigbo, for Biafran nationalism, is also within this category. The relation between intellectuals and artists and the single-party African state has not been a happy one. The novel has developed from anti-colonialism to "realism" and *engagement*. But even the political polemic which has been in some cases the natural direction of literary development (as in the case of Mongo Beti, who has dropped novel-writing to devote himself to polemic, e.g, his recent *Main basse sur le Cameroun*), is still substantially different from "revolutionary nationalism".

Soviet critics, who as usual go to great lengths to label all change over which they have little control progressive, tend to lump the most recent varieties of protest together.[54] But there are distinctions to be drawn. English-speaking Africans are for the moment far from the "Marxist-Leninist" position of de Andrade, Neto, and others--with of course the exception of the South Africans. Their malaise is usually tagged "disillusion".[55]

Taken from a remark by Wole Soyinka, "disillusion" refers to the "wave of pessimism" shown in works like *A Man of the People*, *The Interpreters*, The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, Dramouss, or Le Devoir de violence. These novels do represent something new in African literature; they leave the simple patterns of anti-colonial literature behind; they reach out towards new attitudes towards Africa; they use a variety of styles and techniques, the scatology of Armah, the pornography of Ouologuem, the cinematic montage of the latter or of Soyinka's multi-dimensional novels.

These novels surpass the Manichean world of anti-colonial literature. But they are also a continuation of those patterns. They react against the idealization of Nation and national life which was the logical conclusion of the anti-colonial struggle.

Soviet and Eastern European critics like Calperina, Breskina, Ortova, and Paricsy draw a line between the literature of "social ideas"--by definition progressive--and that of culture identity. According to the first, Nigerian writers like Soyinka and Achebe base their works upon African life, and analyse society in terms of social struggles, and are thus laudable.[56] Breskina compares the "realism" of Ousmane, Beti, and Oyona with Cheikh H. Kane, who sought a religious solution to social problems.[57] The concept of social realism is indeed all important within Marxist aesthetics, but it is inextricably linked with that of engagement. Political protest and realism would go hand in hand in the Soviet school.

Anglophone criticism has in general praised the rise of realism within African literature, and not rejected the morality implied by that "objectivity": the relationship between the new "African literature and the new African state" is perceived as one of protest, just like that earlier literature and the European colonial administration. But there is no adjacent alternative to the societies presented in the novels. Hypothetical "African" values can no longer replace "European" values. The novels of disillusion have no stand-by visions waiting in the wings, unless it be a vague faith in the future, as in Dramouss.

To a certain extent the Soviet thesis is correct. Protest can be a forerunner of progressive political positions. Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born focused on the corruption and decadence of the ruling class. It forces its readers's faces into an excremental vision of the world wrought by the elite. The political conclusions remain to be drawn. They are outside the scope of the novel, which finishes in despair. But Armah's article on "African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific",[58] is an exposition of revolutionary nationalism, of the Fanonian position. He rejects not only Senghor, but facile nationalism. And there is no contradiction between the tenets of the article and the aesthetic scatology of the novel. Marx himself was capable of scatological attacks on his enemies, as in the following which might well have served as epigram to Armah's novel:

> ... auch der Kampf sich auf diese nationale Scheisse zu beschränken scheint, eben weil diese Nation die Scheisse an und für sich ist. Ubrigens ist es ganz einerlei, was das Bewusstsein alleine anfängt, wir erhalten aus diesem ganzen Dreck nur das eine Resultat.[59]

Yet the literature of disillusion and that of social ideas are not necessarily identical. In some cases,as those of Laye and Ouologuem, political leaders are responsible for the corruption of Africa. Laye's *Dramouss (A Dream of Africa)* portrays the homecoming of a young man from abroad, a return full of promise and ambition. His hero discovers the damage independence and the arrogance of the new elite have wrought upon the daily life of his village, and ends with condemnation of Guinea and its leaders as having betrayed the "real" Africa. Camara Laye now lives in exile in Senegal, having been deprived of his national citizenship.[60]

In other words, the ideologies based on the new national units can be quite different, depending on their reference to the "content" of those nations. Mere protest against the national state may not necessarily be the same thing as the active and revolutionary literary forms espoused by de Andrade or other "Marxist-Leninist" critics.

A second side of Fanon, one which is largely responsible for his reputation as radical, adds a further nuance to the tableau we have been drawing up. Fanon claimed that only revolutionary violence could "commute" Colony to Nation, and this on psychological as well as political levels. His position is rooted in three sources: his career as psychologist, his studies, and his revolutionary "practice" in Algeria.

Violence was a form of self-affirmation to Fanon the psychologist, especially violence directed against the initial violence of colonialism. Gendzier discusses his clinical experience in Algeria in detail, but the roots of his thought are well expressed by the author himself in *Peau noire*, masques blancs, an essay on the problems of linguistic, psychological and sexual identity posed by political oppression which did not directly propose group violence as a solution to the psychological afflictions of the colonized, but which did urge aggressive self-assertion.[61] After rethinking négritude, Fanon moved gradually from individualist to social solutions. Revolution was a clinical as well as political need. When all members of a collectivity share the same psychological perturbations, then individual symptoms and collective political conditions merge. Colonialism is equated with sickness, and sickness calls for cure. The extrapolation of therapeutic needs, the "knack for transforming clinical insight into political poetry", played a large part in the creation of Les Damnés de la terre.

Sartre's influence on Fanon was not limited to "Orphée noir" or early existentialism. Critique de la raison dialectique is, in a sense, the philosophical underpinning of Les Damnés de la terre. The central tenet of that staggering dialectical analysis of Dialectics, is that authentic action occurs only at moments of rupture within the pratico-inerte, the daily enslavement to the false values, reifications of a social and economic system. Violence abruptly shatters social inertia, and forges a new group, a new community of action which raises the group above and prevents it from falling back into the pratico-inerte. Violence, in Sartrian philosophy, has the sporadic quality of sickness, but it is in fact daily inertia which is nauseous, and violence which is its cure.

Violence is precisely what Fanon prescribes for the wretched of the earth. And he prescribes it for its intrinsic therapeutic effect.

> Au niveau des individus, la violence désintoxique. Elle débarasse le colonisé de son complexe d'infériorité, de ses attitudes contemplatives ou désespérées. Elle le rend intrépide, le réhabilité à ses propres yeux. Illuminée par la violence, la conscience du peuple se rebelle contre toute pacification. Les démagogues, les opportunistes, les magiciens ont désormais la tâche difficile. La praxis qui les a jetés dans un corps à corps désespéré confère aux masses un goût vorace du concret. L'entreprise de mystification devient, à long terme, pratiquement impossible. [62]

There are other less figurative expressions of the necessity of revolutionary violence: those of Merleau-Ponty (one of whose lectures Fanon attended in Lyon in the late forties),[63] according to whose Humanisme et terrorisme violence is built into capitalist society, into colonialism, such that there is no way to avoid it; those of Sorel, whom Hannah Arendt and Renate Zahar compare with Fanon;[64] those of Sartre, whose description of the origins of violence in colonial struggles is almost identical to Fanon's, although posed in philosophical rather than psychological terms:

> La violence de l'insurgé, c'est la violence du colon; il n'y en a jamais eu d'autre. La lutte de l'opprimé et de l'oppresseur devient pour finir l'intériorisation réciproque d'une même oppression: l'objet premier de l'oppression en l'intériorisant et en y trouvant la source négative de son unité devient terrible pour l'oppresseur qui reconnaît dans la violence insurrectionnelle sa propre violence oppressive comme force ennemie le prenant à son tour comme objet.[65]

Needless to say, there are responses to these justifications of violence, those, philosophical, of Raymond Aron, or Camus;[66] those based on pragmatism:

> Yet here Fanon enters a cul-de-sac. Once beyond the scope of the colony itself--where "natives" confront Europeans in an overwhelming majority--the basis of Third World threat and demand become unclear and unconvincing. The section dealing with the

> international level ("Violence and the International Context") is in fact one of the weakest of the book, as Fanon uses his verbal skills to obscure rather than illuminate. [67]

The above was written before the "oil crisis" and the organization of the Third World, which appeared to some to be convincing threats, but are not violent in the sense of Fanon.

The Vietnamese critic Nghe criticizes Fanon for the "vestiges of subjectivism" inherent in the glorification of violence, the failure in short to distinguish between violence as a means and as an end, for the psychological benefits it is alleged to yield.[68]

In other words, Fanon's logic, once laid bare, is a particularly bizarre one:

$$\frac{\text{violence}}{\text{non-violence}} = \frac{\text{cure}}{\text{disease}} = \frac{\text{culture}}{\text{non-culture}} = \frac{\text{nation}}{\text{colony}}$$

Although one of Fanon's primary intentions was to denounce the polarity of the colonial world-view, his own "universe" is also polar. There is a difference between the stately oppositions of Senghorian négritude, where the play of oppositions is unconscious, and the frantic and fiery tone of Fanon's attacks on négritude. This difference is not merely a matter of content. Fanon stands in the same relation to négritude as négritude did to colonialism: he surpassed the contradictions of a previous code, but then becomes entangled in his own.

Nationalism contains within it the seeds of absolutism. The homogeneization of all forms within the accepted boundaries of a given nation serves centralizing forces. All which is alien is excluded. Given the connections between Nation and Colony, decolonization becomes a matter of converting difference into identity, not only in the psychological sense, as when we speak of personal or national identity, but in the formal sense of the word. Identity marks all the parts of a whole.

After having quoted Hegel on harmony and Nietzsche on the necessary unity of artistic style, Césaire therefore drew a direct parallel between variegation and colonialism:

> Le résultat de ce manque d'intégration par la dialectique du besoin, c'est l'existence dans tous les pays coloniaux d'une véritable mosaïque culturelle. Je veux dire que dans tous les pays coloniaux les traits culturels sont juxtaposés, et non harmonisés. Qu'est-ce que la civilisation si ce n'est une harmonie et une globalité. 69

What is of interest is the shape of Césaire's argument. He defines colonialism in formal terms. And the counterpart of his equation is that any integrated unit can itself disintegrate, break down into component parts. Maintaining a discourse implies maintaining certain clearly circumscribed semiotic unities--nation, colony, love, hate--entities which interact in polar ways. But dereification, the escape from an ideological circle, means breaking apart these entities.

Boundaries are thus crucial to the formulation of identities: they are the external limits of an entity. If it is true, as Wittgenstein said, that concepts do not really have clearly defined limits, rather blur over into an intermediate zone in the same way that the cone of light from a table lamp gradually diffuses into shadow, it is also true that in the hard-edged world of ideology concepts act as if they do have limits. And they do so because they seduce us into believing that they have internal coherence. This illusion is at the heart of human discourse and of political ideology.

By analogy, political boundaries are also an effect of ideology, though political leaders prop up the illusion of their boundaries with border stations and administrations. Political boundaries are illusory in the sense that the identity they apparently enclose exists only as a function of those boundaries, not as their deep cause. To paraphrase Memmi above, territorial integrity is the result of the systems creating it, not their cause. This evident order is conjured away by practically all those who exploit the concept of identity, by those who persuade their victims that their content is a cause of rhetorical operations, not a function of them.

Césaire's aim was in other terms to discover the "interior essence of a whole"--Althusser's "essence intérieure du tout".[70] In his "Lettre à Maurice Thorez" with which he broke with the PCF in 1956, he lays down the terms of this independence.

> Nous voulons que nos sociétés s'élèvent à un degré supérieur de développement, mais d'elles-mêmes, par croissance interne, par nécessité intérieure, par progrès organique, sans que rien d'extérieur vienne gauchir cette croissance, ou l'altérer, ou la compromettre. 71

This is fairly clear. The poles Inner and Outer are most obviously present, as is the ubiquitous organic metaphor. A healthy society (and Césaire here joins with Fanon in his demand for the revolutionary "cure" for the "disease" of colonialism), is a society which is homogenous, and is so because its internal logic determines all its forms.

This development represents, however, a significant step forward from essentialist négritude, which sought out its identity in its difference from European values, that is, with an opposition which automatically reduced it to dependence. Nationalism operates at a very basic level of discourse, that at which the poles are practically those of discourse itself:

$$\frac{\text{internal}}{\text{external}} = \frac{\text{harmony}}{\text{disharmony}} = \frac{\text{integration}}{\text{disintegration}} = \frac{\text{independence}}{\text{dependence}}$$

The appeal of nationalist thought is thus in its fundamentality. Once, moreover, a colony has been defined as a state of dependence, of disintegration, of cultural disharmony, and nation has been designated as its opposite, the polarity Colony/Nation becomes firmly fixed; and with it, its innumerable contradictions.

Fanon was a proponent of *authentic* rather than purely formal nationalism. He pointed out the conflict *within nations* between the African proletariat, the peasant masses, and national bourgeoisies, the elite. Fanon's insistence that until the peasants "enter history" nothing fundamental has changed, is the key to his thought, his most valuable contribution to radical political theory. He assays nations in terms of their class content.

The elite is the instrument of colonialism, of neo-colonialism, of Europe. The relationship between the elite and the masses is analogous to that between Europe and Africa:

$$\frac{\text{Europe}}{\text{Africa}} = \frac{\text{dominating}}{\text{dominated}} = \frac{\text{elite}}{\text{masses}}$$

but only within certain contexts. One must always proceed to further analysis, to an investigation of power relations within a given entity, e.g. Europe or Africa. Both are composed of elite and mass parts.

Sartre, for example, had moved directly from the topic of race to that of class in "Orphée noir", in 1947. But he wrote at a time when the coming of multiple national independences, the mini-states, was not all that evident. Thereafter, the route to a class analysis was through the endless sticky difficulties nationalism raises: how do nations "contain" the classes within them, which are by definition supra-national. The maintenance of national boundaries is a barrier of defence for an elite. And nationalist ideologies freeze discourse at the level of Nation. Their effect is to inhibit the conceptualization of "post-nationalist" criteria.

Nationalist thought has an immense appeal because of its fundamentality, but revolutionary thought is even more attractive; the poles implied in class analysis are very close to those primary and indispensable concepts at the heart of semantics, the hyponymic relationship of parts and wholes.[72] The conundrum of class is that there remain parts, an elite, marked off from and separated from a whole, which form the masses would take were there not an elite. In other words:

$$\frac{\text{part}}{\text{whole}} = \frac{\text{elite}}{\text{mass}}$$

The quest for and the dream of a classless society is also founded upon the frustration engendered by dichotomy: the difficulty of seizing the totality of a concept without its bifurcating. Or, in Marxist terms, as long as the dialectic functions, contradictions necessarily occur, even within a nominally classless society. All these give birth to antitheses.

The relationship between rhetoric and revolution ought now to be clear. The fundamental contradiction in history is between a possessive and dominating elite and depossessed and dominated mass. This is true materially--obviously--and can be verified on any scale. The north/south, white/coloured, developed/developing, centre/periphery conflicts are ways among others to express this contradiction. And each of the latter terms of these couplets is usually synonymous with "Third World". Revolution, on a conceptual level, occurs whenever any of these dichotomies is abolished, is antiquated. But the contradiction between the elite and the masses, so closely related to a crucial figure of dialectical thought--and to a figure of "deep rhetoric"-,is a chronic and persistant one. Even the existence of a revolutionary vanguard is a form of elite/mass conflict, and the inability of the vanguard to recognize its nature and work towards its own elimination is yet another aggravation of conflict.

Although in theoretical terms we must envisage a continuing call for revolution as long as the dialectical process continues, as long as the material world contains embedded within it the contradictions of thesis/anti-thesis, there are in practical terms relative moments of movement forward, of resolution of contradiction, of liquidation of contradiction. Any reluctance to pursue further the contradictions which are inherently present in social situations as man has so far known them, is, on the other hand, an abnegation of the role of a vanguard, confirmation that another elite has simply settled in.

Rhetoric within Africa as all societies obscures that refusal to proceed, that establishment of privilege. As opposed to the conservative ideologies of Senghor, of Cheikh Anta Diop, of most African literary critics, "revolutionary" ones aim towards a new Africa, and aim to do so through change of material conditions and political mobilization. But these revolutionary ideologies are so incrusted with concepts held over from the past and so shaped by the prestige and power of political and oratorical privilege that they miss their mark--indication that the colonization was thorough-going and largely successful.

In the first place, the revolutionary elite takes its own history for that of the masses. Decolonization in the case of some is conceived according to arbitrary and inappropriate models, and too closely related to the existence and survival of nations. Nations themselves are attributed many misplaced metaphorical qualities. Because of the homogeneity and exclusivity underlying nationalistic discourse, they become static and sterile. Those, like Fanon, whose nationalism surmounts this theoretical (and practical) blunder, often then mistake means and end, and exalt violence as more than a merely strategic obligation. Finally, and paradoxically because of the very compelling and fundamental shape of the theoretical arguments against elitism--the eternal contradiction between part and whole--, these vanguards are able to deflect analysis and criticism of their own elitism.

Against such a background, literary systems and taxonomies and hence the numerous specific textual analyses which they support, are of two kinds: those which continue to conceive of African or any "Third World" literature as a prolongation--exotic perhaps but essentially the same--of elitist forms of literature as they now exist; and those which seek out, perhaps through a long process of trial and error, of hypotheses suggested, confirmed or refuted, the "growth points" within them which foreshadow and herald a mass literature which is not and can never be our own.

FOOTNOTES: RHETORIC AND REVOLUTION

[1] Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnées de la terre*. Paris, 1970, p. 164.

[2] A. Zolberg. "Frantz Fanon: A Gospel for the Damned", *Encounter*, November, 1966, pp. 56-63.

[3] David Caute, *Fanon*. London, 1970, p. 49.

[4] Irene Gendzier, *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Study*. New York, p. xiii.

[5] Caute, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

[6] Eco has had the last word against those whose ritual is to attack "empiricism" as "bourgeois". Models may well establish the framework of perception, but there is always some form of *adéquation*. Umberto Eco, *La Structure absente*. Paris, 1972, p. 387.

[7] L.V. Thomas, "Temps, mythe et histoire en Afrique de l'ouest", *Présence africaine*, 40 (4e 1961), pp. 12-58.

[8] Thomas, ibid., p. 41.

[9] E.g. J. Ki-zerbo, "L'Histoire: levier fondamental", *Présence africaine*, 37 (2e 1961), pp. 144-7.

[10] "Culture et colonisation", *Présence africaine*, 8-9-10 (juin-novembre 1956), p. 190.

[11] John Makakis, "African Nationalism and the History of Africa", *African Forum*, III, 2-3 (Fall 1967), p. 107.

[12] J. Ki-zerbo, "Histoire et conscience nègre", *Présence africaine*, 16 (octobre 1957), p. 53.

[13] Georges Balandier, "Les Mythes politiques de colonisation et de décolonisation", *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, XXXIII, 62, p. 95.

[14] John Makakis, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

[15] Paris, 1950. Translation by Pamela Powesland, New York, 1964.

[16] Albert Memmi, *Portrait du colonisé*. Paris, 1966. p. 126.

[17] Georges Balandier, "Mythes politiques de colonisation et de décolonisation", *op. cit.*, p. 86.

[18] Gérard Genette, *Figures II*, Paris, 1969, pp. 23-42.

[19] Ferdinand N'Sougan, "Sociologie littéraire et artistique de l'Afrique", *Diogène*, 74 (avril-juin 1972), p. 106.

[20] Mario de Andrade, Introduction to La Poésie africaine d'expression portuguese. Honfleur, 1969, p. 14-9.

[21] Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre. pp. 153-4.

[22] As in Haberly, "The Search for a National Literature", Comparative Literature Studies, XI, 1 (1974), pp. 85-95.

[23] Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre. p. 154.

[24] The very need to move towards "the people" indicates that those who move are part of an elite.

[25] Situations V. Paris 1964, pp. 194-253.

[26] "Si nous voulons pas que la dialectique redevienne une loi divine, une fatalité métaphysique, il faut qu'elle vienne des individus et non de je ne sais quels ensembles supra-individuels". Sartre, Critique de la raison dialectique. Paris, 1960, p. 131.

[27] For which the classic example is still Moscow versions of C.P.U.S.S.R. history.

[28] See Mao Tse-tung, "On Contradiction", Selected Readings. Peking, 1971.

[29] Balandier, op. cit., p. 87.

[30] In reference to S. Amin, "Le Modèle théorique d'accumulation", Tiers-monde, XII, 52 (octobre 1972), 703-26. Our Chapter Five.

[31] Amin, ibid. pp. 724-5.

[32] J.P. Sartre, "Orphée noir", in L.S. Senghor (ed.) Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française. Paris, 1948.

[33] Gendzier, op. cit., p. 30.

[34] Sartre, "Orphée noir", p. xli.

[35] Fanon, "Les Damnés de la terre. p. 146.

[36] Fanon, ibid., p. 146.

[37] Fanon, ibid., p. 164.

[38] Fanon, ibid., p. 172.

[39] Fanon, ibid., p. 173.

[40] Fanon, ibid., p. 150.

[41] Fanon, ibid., p. 151.

[42] Fanon, ibid., p. 155.

[43] Fanon, ibid., p. 151.

[44] Fanon, ibid., p. 171.

[45] Richard Preto-Rodas, Négritude as a Theme in the Poetry of the Portuguese-Speaking World. University of Florida, 1970, p. 63.

[46] Luandino Vieira is the author of the novel, which was made into the recent film Zambizanga, after a working class neighbourhood of Luanda.

[47] Mario de Andrade, La Poésie africaine d'expression portuguese. Honfleur, 1969, pp. 6, 14.

[48] Mario de Andrade, ibid., p. 19.

[49] Mario de Andrade, ibid., pp. 29-30.

[50] Mario de Andrade, ibid., p. 1.

[51] David Diop, "Contribution au débat sur la poésie nationale", Présence africaine, (février-mai 1956), pp. 113-5. Claude Wauthier

"No Ebony Towers for African Writers", _Optima_, 18, 4, pp. 194-200.

[52] As in the articles in Rotberg and Mazrui, _Protest and Power in Black Africa_. New York, 1970.

[53] In particular _The Dance of the Forest_, written for Nigerian independence. See D.S. Izevbaye, "Politics in Nigerian Poetry", _Présence africaine_, 78 (2e 1971), pp. 143-67.

[54] F.M. Breskina, "Problèmes du heurt des époques dans la prose de l'Afrique occidentale", _L'Afrique dans les études soviétiques, 1968_. Moscou, 1970, pp. 75-104; Y.L. Galperina, "Under the Sign of Ogun: the Young Writers of Nigeria, 1960-65", _Africa in Soviet Studies Annual, 1969_. Moscow, 1971, pp. 162-83; Jarmila Ortova, _Etudes sur le roman au Cameroun_. Prague, 1971; P. Paricsy (ed.), _Studies on Modern Black African Literature_. Budapest, 1971; P. Paricsy, "Research in Black African Literature within European Socialist Countries", _Research in African Literature_, III, 1 (Spring 1972), pp. 36-50.

[55] G. Griffiths, "The Language of Disillusion in the African Novel", in Anna Rutherford (ed.) _Common Wealth_. Aarhaus, 1972. A. Ravenscroft, "African Literature V: Novels of Disillusion", _Journal of Commonwealth Literature_, 6 (December 1968), pp. 120-37.

[56] Galperina, "Under the Sign", _op. cit._, p. 167.

57 Breskina, "Problèmes du heurt", *op. cit.*, p. 77.

58 *Présence africaine*, 64 (1967), pp. 6-32.

59 Marx, *Die deutsche Ideologie*. p. 107.

60 Charles Larson, "Laye's Unfulfilled African Dreams", *Books Abroad*, XL, 2 (1968), p. 209.

61 Gendzier, *Frantz Fanon*, pp. 63-115.

62 Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*. p. 57.

63 Caute, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

64 Renate Zahar, *L'Oeuvre de Frantz Fanon*. Paris, 1970, p. 93.

65 Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique*. p. 687.

66 Raymond Aron, *Marxismes imaginaires*. Paris, 1970; Camus, *L'Homme révolté*. Paris, 1965.

67 Paul A. Beckett, "Frantz Fanon and Sub-Saharan Africa", *Africa Today*, XIX, 2 (Spring 1972), p. 62.

[68] N. Nghe, "Frantz Fanon et les problèmes de l'indépendence", La Pensée, 107 (février 1963).

[69] Aimé Césaire, "Culture et colonisation", op. cit., p. 201.

[70] Louis Althusser, Lire le Capital II. Paris, 1965, p. 40.

[71] Césaire, "Lettre à Maurice Thorez", in Kesteloot (ed.) Anthologie négro-africaine. Paris, 1967, p. 108.

[72] A.J. Greimas, Sémantique structurale. Paris, 1966, p. 29.

CONCLUSION

Hypothetical, heuristic, Third World Literature is a critical concept whose value is, for the moment, exploratory. It has a bare foothold in the Groves of Academe, and the notion of the Third World itself has recently begun splitting into fourth and fifth worlds as facile binary models of international politics have fallen apart.

African Literature would be a large component of this putative Third World Literature and many writers (Senghor, Diop, Jahn, Fanon, Césaire) have enunciated standards for African literary culture which bear directly upon its theoretical foundation. Without overstepping the bounds of the evidence presented here, and in order to place it within the perspective which most African writers themselves would seek out--their relationship to the whole developing world--we will devote this summary to establishing several parameters of an autonomous

Third World literary tradition. This will permit us in conclusion to pass in review at the same time the main traits of ideology in Africa.

The "Third World" is a political, not a geographical concept; within territories usually thought of as part of the Third World, there are many phenomena which belong to the Western tradition, to the tradition of Prospero. Nor is it sufficient to draw up a list of formal or other characteristics, themes, styles, genres, which might set off this category from what, it is implied, are the literatures of the "First and Second" worlds. A battery of themes is a fairly superficial means of parcelling out segments of literary production. While not "interchangeable"and while obviously deriving from the authors' and their societies' preoccupations, themes are, as comparatists have made a point of repeating, universal, limited in number. Neither the choice of genre and style, nor, as most critics agreed in the early years of contemporary African literary history when the confessional and anthropological mode was at its peak,[1] is local colour sufficient grounds for founding or indeed maintaining interest in a literature.

The basis of an original and independent Third World literary tradition is a separate literary and aesthetic domaine, realm, champ, whose difference with that of the West and the western-oriented World literary canon taught in the West will also be sociological. To be sure, while we are still far from such an entity, new national literatures are "accredited" each year: David T. Haberly has drawn up, in Comparative

Literature Studies, a roster of the criteria which he thinks justify speaking of new national literatures, the most important of which is forging a national literary language.[2] Comparatists find this very appealing. We have a tradition which describes the development of national entities or even civilizations from the moment a literary language congeals--Latin, the "re-birth" of Western culture due to Provençal, the birth of Italian from Tuscan, German from Luther,[3] etc. But for reasons discussed in Chapter Eight, Haberly's and the usual comparatist version of things does not accord with what a large number of African ideologues, e.g. Fanon, Césaire, de Andrade, consider the goal of Third World literary development, for they hold that its end is not national autonomy or ethnic self-consciousness, but class consciousness. In the long run, moreover, Haberly's model succumbs to the contradictions which Wellek himself enumerates:

> Problems of "nationality" become especially complicated if we have to decide that literatures in the same language are distinct national literatures, as American and modern Irish assuredly are. Such a question as why Goldsmith, Sterne and Sheridan do not belong to Irish literature, while Yeats and Joyce do, needs an answer. Are there independent Belgian, Swiss and Austrian literatures? It is not very easy to determine the point at which literature written in America ceased to be "colonial English" and then became a national literature. Is it the mere fact of political independence? Is it the national consciousness of the authors themselves? Is it the use of national subject-matter and "local colour?" Or is it the rise of a definite national literary style?[4]

Literary history is never free of ideological presumptions, perhaps the foremost of which is that it is free of them. The concept of nation is a cornerstone to the critical edifice of the past two centuries (and is still very important to "Marxist" thinkers like Fanon). But the notion of nationhood was taken from the ideological repertory of the class constructing nations. However a-political a critic may believe himself to be, his use of national categories binds him to the culture of nationalism. Prescription accompanies description. Only a madman would claim that nations do not exist--they have armies. Choosing to consecrate their culture is not, however, a neutral act.

Economically, nations are the exclusive markets of those who do business within them--une exclusivité de l'exploitation.[5] Centuries of common submission to a government, as well as shared language and culture (which do not necessarily signify national status, just as, inversely, national status does not imply shared language or culture), produce the impression of national identity, as well as the common literary milieux and markets which are the basic units of nationalist Comparative Literature (of which the so-called French school is a good example, for it is the strictest about limiting influence, exchange or contact to interaction among nations).

A peculiar logic prevails when many scholars study national characteristics. A nation, in the modern administrative sense of the word, does not precede common government and customs--not mores but portoria. The existence of the latter and government power to proselytize rights and prerogatives are, instead, the most decisive elements. Yet nationalist historians (including the literary ones who in Wellek's words classify "national literary styles", subject matter, consciousness),often take the effects for the cause, and in Africa this error leaves traces in slight slips of the tongue, as when Sékou Touré,descendant of a warrior chief who for a long time successfully withstood the French, speaks of "re-establishing" national sovereignity, or Kwame Nkrumah, referring to one of the medieval African empires, of the "re-birth" of Ghana.

The forty-odd African nations did not exist as "nations" at all until the Western powers concocted them, and the stragegy of the latter, at that moment, balkanization, has worked. A second "scramble for Africa" ensued, that of cliques within the nascent bourgeoisies fighting for national power. Each has abundantly used the mystiques of nationhood to promote its own interests. Africa was left, at the moment of "decolonization", to divide itself and be conquered.

In literary criticism and history, similar reversed reasoning holds sway. Long lists of national characteristics are compiled and given credence--one thinks of French élégance, Austrian Gemütlichkeit, German Sehnsucht, Anglo-Saxon pragmatism, Portuguese saudade, the Canadian inferiority complex.... In the last case, it has become fashionable to make a national trait out of the lack of one. Perhaps more bienséance de salon than scholarship, these facile attributes do have an underlying purport. In both Canada and Quebec the Arts and scholarship are heavily subsidized by the government, which quite frankly and openly hopes that the cultural and literary renascence funded from the public pocket will help instill a national awareness.

The case of Malcolm Lowry, whom many Canadian critics claim as their own, is also instructive. The Canadian literary establishment bolsters its own prestige by acquiring such a performer, but its appropriation of what actually was just a squatter who had conceived his novel before coming to Canada, who published it elsewhere and never mingled with Canadian literary milieux, brings to the fore all the contradictions underlying national literary identities. It is, precisely, not fruitless to look upon the case of Lowry as one would upon a territorial annexation: those who have power and prepare their "move" with sufficient propaganda can easily extend their own boundaries.

These parenthetical remarks on the Canadian situation are not outstanding exceptions to international literary criticism. The general failure of almost all literary critics to question national "traits" and the apparently more scholarly terms derived from them is easily interpreted as unwillingness to rock the official national boat.

Our aim is not to replace erroneous nationalist literary histories with other ones, but to show that the way out of the nationalist conundrum lies in a radical reform of our ways of "feeling and seeing reality" (Gramsci's *nuova intuizione della vita, un nuovo modo di sentire e di vedere la realtà*).[6] Such a revolution has no meaning outside of politics.

Critical constructions like the Commonwealth, *la francophonie*, and *o luso-tropicalismo* suffer the same contradictions as nationalist ones.

Some African writers themselves see cultural affinity as a pretext and cover for continued economic penetration.[7] Not French, English and Portuguese, but their pidgins are spoken by the population at large in the countries, along with what Africans themselves unfortunately call their "dialects". A pidgin, in African circumstances, is best understood as a second language learned to communicate with others also forced out of speaking their own. Only the African elite shares a culture with the elites of other former British, French and Portuguese colonies. The masses are excluded.

More than mere cross-cultural comparison is at stake in the study of "developing" literatures. Neither contingencies, nor exotic literary flora and fauna, they are, one way or the other, a representative of a trend of history. There are two radically divergent notions of their linear historical development.

Whereas to socialist critics the end of this development is an equitable, that is, classless world society, the humanist school, rooted in the Renaissance, perceives these "minor" literatures as logical steps in the "miniaturization", the on-going parcelling out of a culture united, in the Middle Ages, around common values. The result is the continuous creation of more and more individual, ethnic, national and cultural distinctions. The break-down of a single Weltliteratur into national bits and pieces, each the property of a bourgeoisie proud of its specificity, is the literary corollary of this process; and in its traditional forms, Comparative Literature aims to bridge these solipsistic cultures. Were those islands of culture, each apart unto itself, to fuse, Comparative Literature would, paradoxically, cease to exist. International in scope, traditional Comparative Literature is predicated upon the national state and its culture; it is a kind of reform which leaves intact, while curbing the worst effects of, the system of national literatures.

Max Dorsinville's description of emergent nationalism is relevant to and a logical consequence of liberal comparatism.

> The historical movement in European culture appears consequently, as one going from the general to the private, from the organic to the specific. It is no coincidence that it is precisely the moment when the unitary basis of European literature definitely disintegrated, in the nineteenth century, that there arise the literatures that interest us: "post-European" ones, by which I mean literatures that come to be outside of Europe, and although the products of descendants of Europeans (partly or wholly), nonetheless are expressive of emergent nationalities, or group consciousness.[8]

Unfortunately, we cannot accept that this process is the most important one in the formation of "post-European" literatures, and herein lies our theoretical and critical divergence from nationalist schools of literary history, including comparatism--they merely "patch up" inadequacies and contradictions.

Not only in purely historical, extra-literary terms, but also thematically, in the literary works of the Third World, is the general movement the very opposite of the one claimed by Dorsinville. The great works of Modernism are past history, and were quintessentially

European and bourgeois.[9] The present movement is from private and individualist toward public and collective. Once the question of "group consciousness" has been raised, another question necessarily arises: of which group or groups are the new literatures expressive? The major works of the developing Third World literary canon express not so much national, nor even ethnic, but class consciousness; or, where they have not yet come around to this state, they are in open revolt against nationalist and ethnic ideologies.[10]

To be sure, many African writers assert their faith in the profundity of the private experience,[11] and this fact must be accounted for in any complete or general theory of developing literatures. Manifestations of the "old vision" and the new one exist simultaneously within the same territory, in the same "national" literature, and their inter-penetration is the cause of much confusion. This is true in Latin American literature, where extremely hermetic, a-political and "europeanized" works rub shoulders with politically conscious and simple poetry. But the same is also true in Africa. Césaire's Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, and David Diop's Coups de pilon are certainly still restricted to an elite audience, and an elite audience is one trademark of the old culture. But both marked important moments in the evolution of African cultural history, though neither author was actually born on African soil, and though neither work had much influence outside of the elite. Even within the European literary mode, some works proclaim Public Man and adjure European aestheticism, and others do not.

Our argument is as follows: it makes sense to speak of several large "national" literary blocks, the Anglo-American, the German, the French, the Russian and the Chinese. They are important literary markets, and the works diffused within them share numerous traits. But the creation of additional and much smaller markets is no important moment in World literary history. The creation of yet another corporation does not alter the rules and procedures of the business world.

Comparatists have not been wrong in claiming the kinship of all World literature. Literary relations are conceivable precisely because two literatures share values, techniques, and some sort of audience. Yet comparative studies are especially useful when, instead of focusing on influences and affinities, they are differential, when they investigate ruptures in the literary system. The reasons why two literatures are not in contact are sometimes obvious. A reader with no Swahili cannot read a book in Swahili, but knowledge of its language does not guarantee that the work will be read if it does not fall into the hands of its potential readers, or if those readers have neither the training, the inclination nor the time to read. Translations, travel and multilingualism facilitate contact among the literati. Comparative Literature in its academic incarnations sets the spread of these contacts as its professional aim. Our thesis concerns, on the other hand, a rupture in both the literary system and the barriers between the literary and the non-literary as the West perceives them. Analysis of the relationship between the elite and the mass, and the impact of their relationship upon literary practice, is the key to definition of those barriers.

What then are the grounds for differentiating a Third World literary tradition ? By our own principles, the first must be political: the common denominator of "Third World Literatures" is that they are being born out of a "neo-colonial" economic and political situation. This means that both the political perspectives of those who write an African Literature, but also the economic basis for its existence and diffusion are affected by neo-colonialism.

Neo-colonialism is a big word. We have not used it lightly. The "neo" in this neologism denotes that colonialism, which in the modern, mercantile and finally imperialist sense of the term, has flourished for five hundred years, is still with us, in a new form.

The forms of domination whose evolution lead to "post-colonial" literatures were in essence neither national nor cultural; and the periodization implied in our title is not intended as a response to the problems of the new national literatures. Post-colonial literatures, as usually described (by Haberly for example), are epiphenomenal, as are the nations upon which they are based.

These statements may appear reckless in the extreme, but they follow from a simple theoretical option, that of Escarpit which we have discussed in the introduction and which lead him to ask baldly whether the building-block of literary history ought to be a people, a class, a state or a nation.[12] Our choice has been unambiguous and has been defended throughout the course of this thesis: the underlying logic of history is one of master-slave relations, of class relations, of the dichotomy between the masses and the elite who profit from their work or enforced inactivity. Our literary categories cannot help but reflect these premises.

We regret having to use the word "neo-colonialism", just as we would prefer to avoid "Third World". Both were coined in the heat of political struggle: the former to reject the fiction that legal national independence was an end, rather than a means; the second, the figment that the world was "bi-polar", and that all nations must align themselves upon either an imaginary American or Soviet model. Both terms unfortunately perpetuate misconceptions. The opposition nation-colony emphasizes the mere political domination of one nation over another, whereas colonialism and neo-colonialism are instead different moments in the integration of the Periphery into the international market economy.[13] The Third World is not one third of anything. Régis Debray goes so far as to claim that the very concept promotes the exploitation of underdeveloped countries by concealing the nature of political domination.[14]

Yet the context of neo-colonialism is only a necessary, not a sufficient determinant of a Third World tradition. Those scholars who are uneasy with the use of the term and growth of the discipline of study around "Third World Literature", perhaps perceive, however vaguely, that much of the claim for Third World literary autonomy is dubious or at best exaggerated. At this stage of matters, Third World Literature is in fact marginal, and, with the exception of its "exotic" content (Laye, Ouologuem, Achebe) and occasional stylistic innovations (Soyinka, Clark, Okara), lacking in originality when measured against the profuse and elaborate "high art" of the West. Moreover, many elements within African Literature are self-consciously evolving towards the values and standards of the West and, when they are successes in terms of these standards--the list is increasingly long: Okigbo, Soyinka, Achebe, Tchicaya U Tam'si, Ouologuem--ought more logically be considered as part and parcel of Western World Literature.

More than a shared neo-colonial background, then, must justify speaking of an emerging Third World Literature. The crucial factor is a rupture with the Western literary system which has now for a long time been international and which actively assimilates exotic, primitivist, popular or even revolutionary cultural themes, techniques, and values. In its simplest form, the dilemma of those who postulate their separate identity--and thus difference--is the following: do the new literary works share the elitist and textual literary mode of the international bourgeoisie (and is the change they bring therefore merely a superficial one of content); or do they herald a break with the very bases of that extremely cosmopolitan literature by seeking out a new literary practice?

The answer, in the case of African Literature at least, has come at numerous points in this thesis. The literary marketplace within Africa is still largely dependent upon the West, and until this is changed, its growth will be linked to that of the West. It is also unlikely that an original literature will develop out of the nascent paraliterary markets and oeuvres within Africa: the British model which is often in the back of the minds of critics is a fallacious one. If the English novel was founded upon similar market conditions, attitudes towards and uses of literacy by an upwardly mobile merchant class, that class and its literature could expand because of the unique position in world economic history held by England (one aspect of which was, eventually, to have colonized Nigeria). The oral literatures of Africa in all their diversity of form[15] still hold their audience--although "each old man who dies is a library in flames". The effort of literate African writers to integrate the themes and styles of the traditional heritage is evidence that they recognize its importance. But as we have seen, concern for a past often obscures political problems facing Africa. In any event, the end product of these more or less successful integrations and insertions of traditional material into modern genres is barely to be distinguished from similar achievements in the West. Okigbo has correctly been given the sobriquet of the Ezra Pound of Africa.[16] Tchicaya's poetry is another case in point.

Against this background, Afro-American movements seem a mirror image of African ones. The Afro-American masses of the New World were decidedly influenced by the African culture of their ancestors, and must come to terms with this fact as they come to increasing awareness of their own history. Here again, two "schools" of thought dispute the direction that consciousness ought to take, those who, while defending cultural autonomy, see the awareness of local, national or racial situations as preparatory, indeed, obligatory, to class consciousness (Roumain, Laraque, Depestre), and then those for whom négritude is an end in itself (Brouard, les Griots, etc.)[17].

The African literary culture which by the definition we have reserved for it within this thesis is a thing of the elite, is fundamentally ideological, both measured against historical reality (context, infrastructure), and semiotically, as a formal configuration within language. Not only the discussion on the meaning and importance of the African tradition (versus modernity), that upon African identity (a function of difference from the West), but also that upon nation and colony, upon revolution, finally, upon the very topic of this thesis, the dichotomy between the elite and the masses--all these are examples of binary and triadic ideological patterning at the deep rhetorical level. The central analytical pattern of this thesis is itself binary (elite/masses). We have explained in Chapter Eight, however, why that binary opposition is "more fundamental" than others and why, as a tool, it can lead farther than most other similarly paired terms. It reveals ideology to itself and constantly raises the question of who is participating in any discourse and who profits from it.

Are there grounds then for speaking of a nascent Third World tradition in Africa? We think so, but not without reference to the reservations and specifications repeated throughout this thesis. An "authentic" Third World literary tradition will, for all those reasons, be more than wishful thinking, than prophecy or even "empty rhetoric" only when a literature whose outlines we can still only barely trace is the property of all rather than a few. For reasons we have tried to demonstrate, this will involve both a break with the Western literary market, and wide accessibility to a common culture, of which Escarpit maintains the importance in his "Littérature et développement".[18] This side of those conditions, there can certainly be an African (or Latin American or Asian) Literature, but only one dependent and centered upon the Western mainstream. Exotic pendants to a continually evolving cosmopolitan literary culture whose Tradition of the New will welcome and assimilate them into the international system, these dependent literatures would be of minor interest in world cultural history. If this is the course history takes, there will be no "Third World" literature, as we have defined it, nor an autonomous African Literature. The audience of this latter will be of the same nature as the Western literary audience, the literati, the literate elite, an inner circle whose messages are confined to and of interest only to themselves.

Bernard Mouralis claims in Les Contre-littératures that the Negro-African text represents a rupture with the Western literary realm, and this present thesis could well close with a few responses to his following assertion:

> A la différence de ce qui se passait dans le phénomène de l'exotisme ou dans la problématique constituée par la confrontation discours du peuple/discours sur le peuple, la manifestation de l'altérité s'est opérée en quelque sorte jusqu'au bout (dans le cas du texte négro-africain). La voix de l'Autre a atteint--et conquis--une complète autonomie et ne peut donc plus être intégrée dans le champ littéraire pour lequel elle est devenue désormais totalement étrangère.[19]

But African writers themselves declare that the Negro-African text is far from having autonomy, either a public or a style of its own. The great African poets have sought out Western influences and quite frequently their project of autonomy is a simple matter of acquiring a plot of literature over which they can reign as *maîtres chez eux*. Senghor is perhaps the best but by no means the sole example. Césaire, despite claims to the contrary, was strongly influenced by surrealism, both in theme and in style. His literary descendent Tchicaya U Tam'si avows that he aims at only a public of 200 readers. Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, John Pepper Clark, to name only the best known of the anglophones, are on occasion exceptionally complex and cosmopolitan, that is, "literary" in a Western sense. All of these examples are almost *prima facie* evidence that the Western model is the dominant one. In spite of its traditional themes and its political content, African Literature does not distinguish itself from the literary system which has for a long time been international. African Literature is at the present rather an integral part of that system. Its creation, its producers and those who consume it are themselves an elite, and frequently not even an African elite.

African Literature is moreover usually published in the West, read in the West or in Westernized milieux, and commented upon in the West. African publishing remains extremely dependent. The African literati, the elite of the literate elite, theoretically refuses the domination of the West, as Mouralis points out.[20] But they remain "literarily" Western in their essence and their works are founded upon Western genres and literary modes. The gap between Western and African literati is less striking than that between the latter and their fellow Africans who do not have access to the mass organizational techniques which are the exclusive property of the international elite.

Mouralis asserts that the basically binary arguments put forth in African circles as proof of African autonomy have validity. But it is not enough to wish that the writers work "dans le même sens que les luttes menée parallèlement sur le plan politique", certainly a slogan of many African writers and one that Mouralis himself adopts. There are all kinds of political positions. Autonomy must be based upon more than texts, more than ideology, more than theory. It is rather founded on economic and political strength (like any sector of world culture). If not, it is a pious wish.

Insightful in many ways on the very problems we have been discussing and on the contradictions of the contemporary literary scene, Mouralis himself does not avoid falling into one pitfall of the very humanism he denounces: he mistakes the triadic form of the

European academic dissertation for the real dialectic movement of history.[21]

Our hope is that this academic dissertation has itself not become victim to a similar trap; that, moreover, it will contribute in its own way both to a better understanding and to a real autonomy of Africa.

FOOTNOTES: CONCLUSION

[1] James Olney, Tell Me Africa, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, is nonetheless an interesting manner to approach the problem of autobiography and confessions in African Literature.

[2] David T. Haberly, "The Search for a National Literature: A Problem in the Comparative History of Post-Colonial Literatures", Comparative Literature Studies, XI, 1 (1974), 85-95.

[3] And those who would dispute a specific paternity, e.g. Luther for German, would seek out alternative "literary" linguistic sources in the past.

[4] René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, Third Edition, New York, 1956, p. 52.

[5] Words of Jean-Pierre Bourdouxhe in conversation.

[6] Antonio Gramsci, Litteratura e vita nazionale, Torino, 1950, p. 9.

[7] Mongo Beti, Main basse sur le Cameroun, Montréal, 1974; Sally N'Dongo, La "Coopération" franco-africaine, Paris, 1972.

[8] Max Dorsinville, Caliban Without Prospero, Erin, Ontario, 1974, p. 201.

[9] One need not ascribe to Lukacs' rejection of Kafka to accept this underlying thesis of The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, London, 1963.

[10] Disillusion in the anglophone novel is a good example. See G. Griffiths, "The Language of Disillusion in the African novel", Common Wealth. Aarhaus, 1972, pp. 62-72, and A. Ravenscroft, "African Literature V: Novels of Disillusion", Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 6 (January 1969), 120-137. The revolt against négritude or its nationalist incarnations is not limited to anglophones. One thinks, in the novel of Ouologuem's Le Devoir de violence, in criticism, of Marcien Towa, Léopold Senghor: Négritude ou servitude? Yaoundé, 1971, and S. Adoveti, Négritude et négrologues. Paris, 1972.

[11] John Pepper Clark's use of private experience is one example. Okigbo's poetry is not only private, but privatistic.

[12] Robert Escarpit, "Les Cadres de l'histoire littéraire", Actes du IVe Congrès de l'AILC, Fribourg, 1964, p. 200.

[13] For a good résumé see Samir Amin, "Le Modèle théorique d'accumulation", Tiers-monde, XII, 52 (octobre 1972), 703-26.

[14] Régis Debray, La Critique des armes, Paris, 1974, pp. 32-4.

[15] Ruth Finnegan, Oral Literature in Africa, Oxford, 1970.

[16] Romanus Egudu, "Ezra Pound in Africa: Christopher Okigbo", Comparative Literature Studies, VIII, 2 (June 1971), pp. 143-54.

[17] Paul Laraque, "Politique et culture", Présence Haitienne, 2 (1975), pp. 37-39.

[18] Robert Escarpit, "Littérature et développement", Le Littéraire et le social, Paris, 1970, p. 253.

[19] Bernard Mouralis, Les Contre-littératures, Paris, 1975, p. 165.

[20] Mouralis, ibid., p. 169.

[21] See Gérard Genette, "Rhétorique et enseignement", Figures II, Paris, 1969, pp. 23-42.

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